

GOOD NEIGHBOUR SCHEME INFORMATION PACK

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Introduction

The Rural Community Council of Essex was established in 1929 and is a registered charity that aims to improve and enhance the quality of life for those who live and work in the rural areas of Essex. It encourages self-help community projects and speaks out to the relevant authorities on issues that matter to people living in rural Essex.

There is much discussion about the challenges that confront our rural communities. Current demographic trends suggest an ageing population – an Audit Commission report, *The Coming of Age* (1997), states that the number of people aged over 85 has nearly doubled since 1981 and will double again by the middle of this century. Service provision in rural areas has been declining for several decades and is continuing to decline – shops, Post Offices, schools and pubs are still closing and rural bus services are limited.

People living in rural areas have to travel further and have a greater reliance on private transport to access basic services. The loss of rural services is very debilitating to people without private transport and can exacerbate problems of social exclusion for some groups, including the unemployed, the young, those on low incomes, the elderly and the infirm. In addition, the loss of these services can also mean the loss of a focal point in a village, leading to less social interaction and communication within the community – we no longer know our neighbours.

House prices continue to rise in rural Essex. Many young people cannot afford to live in their local village, new residents are often unconnected to the rural communities and traditional rural residents are being replaced with commuters. As a result many of the traditional support networks that thrived in rural areas are diminished as families and friends move apart.

Good Neighbour Schemes are a way of countering the loss of services and the breakdown of our rural communities. A greater involvement and engagement of people in their community stimulates well-being and cohesion both at a society level and at an individual level. Thus, Good Neighbour Schemes can be seen to have wider consequences within rural areas and often improve the viability and validity of rural communities.

Acknowledgements

This Guidance Pack was compiled with help from a number of sources, including the co-ordinators of the Good Neighbour Schemes in Bures, Clavering, Great Bentley, Great Wakering, Kelvedon and Feering and West Bergholt, and the Good Neighbour Scheme Projects run by Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity, the Hampshire Voluntary Care Group Advisory Service and Community First in Wiltshire. In addition, reference must be made to D.M. Clark's book, *Good Neighbours: A practical guide to setting up a village care group*, produced for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which provides the basis for many of the guidelines contained in this pack.

What are Good Neighbour Schemes?

Good Neighbour Schemes are local voluntary groups which offer a service in their community for those in need of help and support. The people who may need support may be the elderly, disabled, single parents and young mothers, those temporarily in need through illness or anyone who may be isolated within the community.

Good Neighbour Schemes are not there to replace the work done by Social Services and other professional care agencies. They operate on a more personal level than many agency-led schemes, often starting as simple offers of help to an acquaintance in need. However, they can improve the quality of life of people living more isolated lives in rural communities.

The help offered by Good Neighbour Schemes may include:

- Providing transport for appointments, hospital visits or to Day Centres
- Errands, shopping or collecting prescriptions
- Preparing emergency meals
- Household tasks or gardening
- Visiting or befriending
- Letter-writing or form-filling
- Looking after or transporting children
- Helping people after discharge from hospital
- Giving carers a break
- Reading to partially sighted or blind people
- Providing information

Who are they for?

Most schemes have no strict rules about who can use the scheme, although many limit their services to those that live in the village or parish. There is an understanding that the scheme is only there to help people in need, those who, for whatever reason, are unable to help themselves and have no family or friends available.

In reality most of the people who use Good Neighbour Schemes are the elderly, disabled people, the housebound, or those without the use of a car, but it rather depends on the scope of the scheme – each scheme will vary since they are set up to meet specific local needs.

Why have a Good Neighbour Scheme?

As has already been stated, rural service provision continues to decline and demographic change is leading to a loss of community spirit and cohesion, and increasing isolation in rural communities. Experience from other areas suggests that Good Neighbour Schemes can play a key role in village life. They can:

- Aid community involvement, helping to create a strong social bond and promoting people's well-being and self-esteem.
- Offer valuable but informal support and advice, a helping hand.
- Allow some people to retain their independence and remain in their homes for longer than would be otherwise possible.
- Reduce feelings of isolation, exclusion and loneliness.
- Lessen the impact of the ongoing decline in village services such as Post Offices, shops, pubs and public transport.
- Be seen as preventive services, preventing or delaying the need for more costly intensive or specialist care.
- Provide a link between younger and older members of your community, and also between newcomers and more established residents.
- Be seen to have wider consequences within rural areas and often improve the viability and validity of our rural communities.

What's in it for me?

The main advantage of a Good Neighbour Scheme is that it will help others and enhance your community by improving the neighbourly spirit and goodwill. However, the testimony of other volunteers demonstrate that volunteering can be a very rewarding experience:

- It can be good fun.
- You can make new friends and it can help against feelings of isolation.
- Helping others will make you feel good, build your confidence and improve your self-esteem.
- You can gain an enormous sense of achievement and feel part of a team.
- You are doing something really useful that won't get done without your help.
- You can use your talents and prove your capabilities.
- You can learn new skills and develop new interests.
- You can gain valuable experience that may lead to paid work later.
- You can find out more about a type of work you may be considering as a career.

Step 1 – Establish whether there is a need

One imagines that if you are reading this you have already decided that something could be done to improve life in your community. However, some sort of survey should be done to establish how many people will benefit, what type of services are required, how many potential volunteers there are, and how many residents say they will use a Good Neighbour Scheme (although bear in mind that just because people say they will in theory, it doesn't necessarily mean they will in practice). This can be done through a simple door-to-door survey, a questionnaire, or through a public meeting or evening social event. Alternatively, there may already be plans to conduct a Village Appraisal and the needs of the community can be assessed from that.

Any amount of interest, feedback or relevant information that can be gathered at this early stage will contribute to the long-term success of the scheme. Alternatively, a singular lack of interest and support will save you from wasting any more time on the matter and you can give this pack to someone else.

It is as well to note at this stage that setting up a successful Good Neighbour Scheme can take several months, but preparation and forward planning are the key and will make life easier in the long run.

Step 2 – Call a meeting

The first step is to hold a public meeting to ascertain support for the scheme. As many people as possible should attend the meeting. Representatives from local clubs and organisations such as women's groups (e.g. Women's Institute, Mother's Union, etc.), children's groups (e.g. Mothers and Toddlers and playgroups), older peoples' groups and youth groups should be invited, as well as the local Health Visitors, doctors, District Nurses, neighbourhood watch, police, local clergy and parish councillors.

All residents should be informed of the meeting through a poster campaign, posting leaflets to each household or through an article in the parish magazine, preferably all three!

People are likely to protest that their community is already a caring community, and this is probably the case. However, a Good Neighbour Scheme can excite more community feeling, encourage more volunteers and make better use of their time and effort.

If sufficient interest is shown at the meeting a committee of about 5 or 6 people should be elected at the meeting, although this will depend on the size of the scheme. The meeting is also a good opportunity to sign up your volunteers. A list should be made of volunteer names, what help they can offer and their availability. Make it clear that any help, at any time, as frequently or infrequently as they like is valuable. However, some element of consistency and commitment is important.

Step 3 – Do we need a committee?

Yes, although as already stated, the size and composition of the committee will depend on the size of the scheme and the needs of the community. Most existing schemes emphasise the importance of a sound and dedicated committee to the success of their scheme. A committee will be able to monitor progress and sort out any problems. It will share the responsibilities of co-ordinating the scheme and ensure the continuation of the scheme as individuals come and go. Also, the organisation of the scheme will not rely too much on the few people in the village who do everything!

Ideally, each member of the committee should be allocated specific tasks or responsibilities. The committee should include the following posts (with a suggested outline of their respective responsibilities):

- A chairperson – responsible for chairing meetings, recruitment, volunteer support and training (if appropriate)
- A treasurer – responsible for income, fund-raising, donations, payment of volunteers' expense claims, grant applications (if appropriate)
- A secretary – responsible for correspondence, insurance, forms and rosters, leaflets and publicity.
- Specific co-ordinators (such as a street wardens' co-ordinator, a transport co-ordinator, a welcome pack co-ordinator, etc.) – responsible for keeping up to date with volunteers and users details, matching requests to volunteers, ensuring the workload is spread evenly among the volunteers.

The number of committee members and specific co-ordinators will depend on the anticipated scope of the scheme – a scheme that only intends to offer a transport service to a handful of users is likely to be a much simpler affair. In all cases though, account should be made of sickness and holidays such that appropriate cover is available.

The scheme may like to consider adopting a constitution, or at least a set of aims, objectives and simple rules. This is by no means essential but will be necessary should you wish to apply for funding grants – most funders will ask to see a copy of your constitution and a recent set of accounts.

Committee Meetings

Clearly, Committee Meetings can be held as often as is deemed appropriate. Initially, meetings should probably be quite regular, perhaps every two months or so, but once the scheme is up and running three or four a year should be enough.

The Annual General Meeting is an opportunity to tell people how the scheme is running, take advice and opinions from the wider community and, if the constitution requires, elect new people to the committee. It is also a good opportunity to officially thank your volunteers, and recruit new ones. The

Step 4 – Fix the boundaries

It is important to establish the geographical limits of the scheme – who will you be prepared to help and what length of journeys are you prepared to undertake.

Most schemes operate only for the benefit of residents within the village or the parish. This will ensure local loyalties, the relationships between users and volunteers are likely to be stronger, and costs in terms of money and time will be less.

Once your scheme becomes established and well known in the area you may be asked or even expected to expand and include other areas. This should generally be resisted as journeys will be longer, administrative costs greater and more volunteers needed to cover the wider area. Your scheme may also lose the 'local loyalty' factor.

It is not just geographical boundaries that need to be fixed. As we have said, a Good Neighbour Scheme is there to 'offer a helping hand'. It cannot and should not attempt to do the work of social services, district nurses or other professional caring groups and statutory services – certain jobs will be beyond the capabilities of the volunteers. It is important, however, to be aware of when outside help is required and to know whom to turn to on these occasions. Indeed it is a good idea for the committee to maintain links with appropriate agencies. Most people know to ask Social Services, Health Clinics or the Citizens' Advice Bureaux but there are many other organisations that can help, some of which are listed in the section 'Useful Contacts' on page 19.

Finally, as schemes become particularly successful and well known, the statutory authorities may ask them to help with specific tasks or services. Such requests should be treated with caution as it may put too great a burden on the scheme. Consideration must be made of the number of volunteers, the limitations of volunteers' skills and the services they offer. Some volunteers may resent such outside interference. It is important to define the scheme's relationship with the statutory authorities and caring professionals – should any arrangement be made there should be a regular review and the scheme must be able to withdraw at any time.

Step 5 – Deciding which services to offer

This will depend on the needs of your community, the number of volunteers available, and what help they can offer. This will be ascertained at an early stage, following community consultation and when recruiting your volunteers. It will also vary as volunteers come and go and the needs of your community change – it should not be set in stone.

This is another good reason to record the tasks completed by the scheme. You will soon see which services are over-subscribed and where more volunteers are needed, and which are not as well used. Does this mean there really is no demand for it, or does it need better advertising?

The most frequent service offered by Good Neighbour Schemes is transport. In the absence of regular public transport, and the difficulties encountered by elderly and disabled people using public transport, this is probably not surprising. Transport is usually provided for:

- Medical appointments – hospital, doctor, chiropodist, optician (although patient transport services, hospital car schemes and doctor's car schemes may be available)
- Visiting relatives and friends in hospital
- Shopping
- Attending Social Clubs, Luncheon Clubs and Day Centres or social events
- Collecting prescriptions, shopping, pensions, library books

The second aspect of a Good Neighbour Scheme is that of a care and support group, and as such could offer services that may include:

- Visiting or befriending the lonely, the housebound or the sick
- Looking after children
- Help with letters or forms
- Household tasks
- Gardening
- Giving carers a break
- Providing emergency meals
- Reading to the blind or partially sighted
- Comforting the bereaved
- Looking after pets

Some schemes organise social clubs, luncheon clubs and other events to bring people together rather than simply providing a service for individuals. Others also offer use of certain medical aids, such as wheelchairs, walking aids, bathing aids and so on, on a temporary basis. These can come from donations or be purchased specifically for the scheme.

Step 6 – How is it going to work?

This is clearly an important question. There are various ways that Good Neighbour Schemes operate, much depending on the size of the community, the number of volunteers and co-ordinators available, the extent of the services provided and so on.

Some smaller schemes have a co-ordinator for each day of the week who handles all calls and contacts volunteers according to the user's need, regardless of what it is. One scheme has a mobile phone specifically for the use of the scheme that, along with the records of volunteers, gets passed from one co-ordinator to the next according to that week's roster. This has the advantage of there being only one telephone number for the whole scheme. Other schemes list the phone number of each co-ordinator, to be called on the appropriate day. This is clearly less flexible but may be easier if co-ordinators are sure to be available on a given day on a regular basis. Yet another scheme has an answer-phone that a co-ordinator checks morning and evening and records and deals with requests.

Larger and more complex schemes may have specific co-ordinators for each type of service (transport, street wardens, pet care, medical aids, or whatever), and the user will simply call the relevant co-ordinator with their request. The co-ordinator will then phone round to find a volunteer able to help.

However the scheme operates, it is important that users go through a co-ordinator, and the co-ordinator then finds a volunteer. It is also important to arrange adequate cover for holidays and sickness, and ensure users have alternative numbers to call if needed. One scheme makes sure that the user knows they must actually speak to someone, even if it's the wrong person, rather than leave a message on an answer phone. This ensures the request is logged and dealt with and avoids potential embarrassment, mistakes or worse.

The telephone numbers of the scheme or the co-ordinators can be put in the parish and village magazines, can be distributed on leaflets or cards to keep by the phone, or can be part of a special welcome pack or booklet produced as part of the scheme, which will also outline the services offered. These should be distributed throughout the area covered, ideally to every household, and should be kept up to date, with the correct names and contact numbers and accurate scheme details. For further information on Welcome Packs and Booklets see Section 18.

The co-ordinators will have the details of all volunteers, what they are prepared to do and their availability, and will phone round until the request is answered. They should also keep a log of tasks completed, phone calls made (even unsuccessful ones for expenses purposes), and should attempt to spread the work around the volunteers. It is important not to use the same volunteer too often, but also not to use some volunteers too infrequently so that they feel undervalued.

Volunteer Recruitment and Support

The recruitment *and retention* of a sufficient number of committed volunteers is key to the success of the scheme. This will be a continuous process since some people are bound to drop out periodically for various reasons and must be replaced.

Volunteer Recruitment

New volunteers will often be found through word of mouth once the scheme is up and running. However, all forms of publicity, including talks and articles, should include an appeal for new volunteers. Some people have suggested that general appeals for volunteers are only moderately successful, whereas actually asking someone in person may work. Obviously this should be considered carefully; there is a fine line between asking people who would be happy to help but never quite get round to offering, and asking people who then feel pressurised and feel guilty if they say 'no'.

It is worth allocating the job of welcoming new volunteers to one of the committee members, thus making it a formal event. This is an opportunity to explain the finer points of the operation, the record sheets and expenses claims, the system for donations, the importance of confidentiality, and answer any concerns the volunteer may have. A brief volunteer welcome pack detailing all relevant information may be a good idea.

Asking volunteers to fill out a short questionnaire or record sheet will enable you to get to know more about the volunteers and provide a simple way of recording what they are willing to do and when. It is important that volunteers realise that they can offer as much or as little time and effort as they are happy with. Some people may be happy working every day if needed, others only every now and then. Obviously, any amount of help is going to be appreciated and this should be made clear, although some element of consistency and commitment is important. It is worth remembering that people can be both a user and a volunteer – schemes often rely on elderly or housebound people to act as co-ordinators.

The need to know your volunteers is essential as you and your users need to know they are trustworthy and reliable. Ensuring this requires enormous tact and discretion and although proper vetting need not be necessary, **unless they are working with children**, some checks are unavoidable. Some schemes even ask for references and report that volunteers like being asked as it shows they are being taken seriously.

Street Wardens

Some schemes have a network of street wardens, volunteers who are responsible for specific streets, closes or blocks of houses. The role of these wardens varies from scheme to scheme but usually their role is to be aware of what's happening in their area, keep an eye on elderly or vulnerable people and welcome new residents. Whether any formal guidance is given for the role is up to the committee. Some schemes have found some form of guidance works well since volunteer wardens then know what is required of them. Other schemes report that this is too formal and people prefer to carry out the role the way they see fit. The latter will generally mean that the input of the street wardens will vary – some will become very involved and others simply keep a watchful eye. The role of your street wardens can be as large or small as you wish.

A street warden network can be seen as a very easy way to improve community care and integration. No one volunteer has to commit to too much but everyone in the community will know they have someone to turn to if they need help. The street warden could be given a list of other volunteers who can offer more specialised help, for example help with household tasks or gardening, and can act as a co-ordinator for that area.

The number of houses allotted to each warden will depend largely on the number of volunteers available and the make-up of your village. One warden to 15 or 20 houses seems a popular arrangement.

The role of street warden is often a good introduction to a Good Neighbour Scheme, requiring relatively little commitment, and may provide a good source of more active volunteers in later years as people's circumstances change.

Volunteer Drivers

Many schemes find that the biggest problem in their community is a lack of transport. A transport service is needed to help users get to doctor's appointments, to go shopping, visit friends or relatives in hospital and so on. Most of this is done during the day so many volunteer drivers are retired.

Obviously, to be a volunteer driver you need to comply with all the usual legal requirements such as a full driving licence, current tax, MOT and insurance. Drivers need to inform their insurance company that they are using their car for volunteer driving, stressing that they will be receiving expenses only, and that no element of profit is involved. There should be no additional premium charged for this. A sample letter for use by volunteer drivers is included at the end of this pack and written confirmation should be received from the insurance company before the volunteer starts driving for the scheme.

It should be noted that seatbelts should be worn in front and back seats – legally this is the passenger's responsibility in the case of adults but the driver's responsibility for children under 14.

Drivers should be paid a contribution for their petrol and running costs. From 6th April 2002 the Inland Revenue adopted a single tax- free mileage allowance irrespective of engine size. The rates are 40p a mile for the first 10,000 miles in the tax year and 25p per mile for each additional mile over 10,000 miles. This is only a guide and obviously you are free to set your own rates.

Finance – Expenses, Donations, Funding and Grants

A Good Neighbour Scheme will need a treasurer and a bank account. Although the scheme may be relatively informal there will be expenses and income that need to be recorded. Should you decide to apply for grants, most funders will expect to see a recent set of accounts and possibly a projection for the coming year.

Expenses

The main costs incurred when setting up your scheme will be the mobile phone (if needed) and publicity, with insurance, phone calls and travel costs the major expenses once the scheme is up and running.

Volunteers may be offering their services for nothing but should not be out of pocket – drivers should be paid a contribution for their petrol and running costs. From 6th April 2002 the Inland Revenue adopted a single tax-free mileage allowance irrespective of engine size. The rates are 40p a mile for the first 10,000 miles in the tax year and 25p per mile for each additional mile over 10,000 miles. Obviously you are free to set your own rates. With regard to telephone costs, an amount per minute can be paid to co-ordinators, or an itemised bill can be requested. One scheme suggests that it takes on average 3 or 4 calls by the co-ordinator to find a volunteer, so this is an important consideration.

Some volunteers may not want such a contribution but they should be persuaded – it is the only way to discover the true costs of running the scheme. The volunteer can always give the money back as a donation. It has been pointed out that volunteers that refuse expenses may deter others from joining the scheme.

Donations

Some schemes have a suggested tariff for donations, a certain amount per mile perhaps, or for a particular journey. All schemes should encourage clients to make donations, although everyone can be encouraged to give only what they can. Some schemes report that making a donation allows users to take some level of ownership of the scheme. Some people won't accept charity so being expected to pay for the service helps people feel more comfortable about using the scheme on a regular basis.

Volunteers can either be given envelopes in which clients can place donations, or carry donation boxes – such methods avoid potential embarrassment on both sides. Donations should not be refused as clients may feel they need not offer again, or that the service is free, and may expect it to be so next time.

Do we need insurance?

Your Good Neighbour Scheme will almost certainly involve volunteers offering some sort of transport service, so some consideration of insurance is required. When using private cars it is essential that the volunteers inform their insurance company that they are using their car for volunteer driving, stressing that they will be receiving expenses only, and no element of profit is involved. There should be no additional premium charged for this. A sample letter for use by volunteer drivers is included at the end of this pack, and written confirmation should be received from the insurance company before the volunteer starts driving for the scheme.

Ideally, the scheme should arrange insurance cover for public liability and personal accident. It is also suggested that schemes should arrange cover to protect your drivers against loss of their No Claims Bonus – clearly this should encourage more volunteer drivers.

The Wiltshire and Swindon Link Project, who help to develop and support Good Neighbour Schemes in that area, suggest schemes insure with companies who specialise in providing policies to charitable organisations, both large and small. Although we cannot recommend a particular company, two companies who specialise in this field are listed below.

Some policies exclude certain activities so you need to ensure that the policy will cover what the volunteers actually do. For example checking smoke alarms or touching anything electrical such as changing a light bulb.

Charity Assured (a product of AON Ltd) suggests that a policy should include public liability, employer's liability, personal accident and money matters.

Charity Assured Team,
AON Limited, Commercial Division
2/4 West Street
Trinity Court
Fareham
Hampshire
PO16 0BH

Tel: 0845 740 2003

e-mail: charityassured@ars.aon.co.uk

www.charityassured.co.uk

Zurich Municipal
The Gemini Centre
88 New London Road
Chelmsford
CM2 OYN

Tel: 01245 492233

www.zurich.co.uk

Publicity

All the literature concerning Good Neighbour Schemes agrees that publicity is of the utmost importance. Both potential users and volunteers need to know that the scheme exists, what help it can provide, how it works and how to contact the co-ordinators. This can be done in a number of ways:

- Through door-to-door leafleting of all households
- Posters throughout the village
- Articles in the parish magazines
- Talks to local clubs and organisations, such as the Women's Institute, social clubs and so on
- Articles in the local press or on local radio
- Newsletters
- Welcome Packs
- Word of mouth

Word of mouth is often the best form of publicity, and both users and volunteers should be encouraged to share their experiences and inform others of the benefits of the scheme. It is worth asking users for feedback and asking permission to quote some of the more positive comments in articles and advertising material.

If anyone has the time and the enthusiasm, a short newsletter is a good way of advertising the scheme, relating success stories, and updating volunteers and users about the scheme, other support groups, new legislation and other items of interest.

Finally, be sure that the professional care services are aware of the scheme and have up to date information.

Points to Consider

Charity Status

A charity is an organisation whose objects and activities are exclusively charitable – it cannot undertake activities or spend money on anything that does not further its charitable objects. It must also comply with charity law, for example in keeping and submitting accounts. An organisation that has exclusively charitable objects has a duty under the Charities Act 1993 to register as a charity unless it has neither permanent endowment nor the use or occupation of land, nor gross income above £1000 per year.

This may all sound a bit heavy. However, there are certain advantages to charitable status:

- Mandatory 80% rate relief, with discretionary power for local authorities to waive the remaining 20%.
- Relief from payment of income tax and corporation tax (except on the proceeds of charity trading).
- Relief from Capital Gains Tax.
- Fundraising benefits – many trusts and statutory bodies only assist registered charities.
- Public relations benefits – donors, volunteers and users may all feel more confident in the scheme if it is a registered charity.

It's up to you and the committee; it's just an idea!

Training

This may seem an unnecessarily big step for a simple Good Neighbour Scheme, but it is becoming more common and can improve confidence and performance, and may encourage more volunteers if they think they are going gain new skills. Basic training in First Aid, personal skills, funding applications, as well as training in managing volunteer groups, chairing committee meetings, drafting constitutions, and so on, are available from the RCCE or your local Council for Voluntary Services.

Identity Cards

Whether you feel Identity Cards are necessary depends somewhat on the size of the scheme and the number of people involved. You may feel that since everybody knows everybody else in the village such things are unnecessary, and you may be right. However, as the scheme grows and more people want to get involved some of your clients may not know all the volunteers, and vice versa. A simple ID Card (with or without a photograph) can help to reassure people, especially older or isolated people, particularly at a time when bogus callers are such an issue.

Privacy

Volunteers must respect the privacy of the users at all times – this cannot be emphasised too strongly. It is vital that users trust and respect the scheme and the volunteers, and it is worth discussing this issue at meetings from time to time to reinforce the point to your volunteers.

Welcome Packs and Good Neighbour Scheme Booklets

A Welcome Pack is an excellent way of welcoming new residents to the village and helping them become integrated into the community as quickly as possible. It may also be used as a way of providing useful information to the community at large, an important role of Good Neighbour Schemes. Used in conjunction with a Good Neighbour Scheme, it is a good way of publicising the scheme, a simple way of publishing contact details of the co-ordinators, the street wardens and other relevant telephone numbers, and making sure everyone knows what services the scheme provides.

Obviously, the Welcome Pack can be as large and comprehensive as your enthusiasm, time and printing costs allow. Some may contain a brief history of the village, some may mention plans or projects ongoing or for the future. All should, however, include some words of welcome to the village from key groups such as the Parish Council, the Church, the Village Hall Management Committee or the Good Neighbour Scheme committee.

The pack should include a contents page for ease of use, a map of the parish and as many useful telephone numbers and bits of local information as possible or appropriate. Most of these are fairly obvious, but here is a list of ideas (though not the definitive list!):

- Parish Councillors and Parish Clerk and other parish officers
- District and County Councillors
- Member of Parliament and European Member of Parliament
- Local community constable
- Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator
- Clergymen and Church Officers (of all denominations)
- Times of Church Services
- Local doctors, and surgery opening times
- Health Visitors and District Nurses
- Hospitals and other Health Services in the wider community
- Village Hall Management Committee details (inc. booking details and fees)
- Details of local schools (primary and secondary)
- Playgroup and Nursery
- Local library and mobile library (with opening times)
- Good Neighbour Scheme Co-ordinators and Street Wardens
- All local clubs, sports clubs, organisations, local support groups
- All local magazine editors and details (inc. deadline for articles)

Getting Outside Help and Useful Contacts

As already mentioned, Good Neighbour Schemes are not there to replace the work done by Social Services and other professional care agencies, and there may come a time when outside help is required. This may mean enlisting the help of professional carers, health professionals or Social Services. However, it may mean you need advice or support from a specialist voluntary organisation or a little information from a helpline. Below are just a few of the organisations that may be of use. This is the tip of the iceberg; there are loads of groups and organisations out there offering information, advice and support, so just ask!

Age Concern 01245 346106

Depending on which part of Essex you live, Age Concern offer services that include a mobile toenail cutting service, a Home Support Service, and advocacy, counselling and befriending services. They also have a helpline offering advice and information on anything from domiciliary health care to hairdressers, and 46 Information Sheets.

Essex Disabled People's Association 01245 287177 (with minicom)

Essex Disabled People's Association Helpline is a good source of information and advice on any issues affecting disabled people.

North East Essex Carers Support (NEECS) 01255 47410

NEECS is a charity offering support and advice to carers across North East Essex, and have a manned office, open Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm. There is also a website providing contact details of a large numbers of support groups and organisations (www.carersten.freeseve.co.uk)

Homestart 01376 554904 (Braintree), 01376 512480 (Witham)

Home-Start is a voluntary organisation offering support, friendship and practical help to families with children under 5 years of age. The organisation operates over 200 schemes across the country, including Braintree, Witham and Halstead.

Braintree Rural Isolation Project 01376 322900

The Braintree Rural Isolation Project aims to provide support for anyone in the Braintree District suffering isolation. The scheme is open to anyone who lives in a rural community, has limited access to transport, has a young family, has a mental health problem, feels isolated or has no support system. The scheme has established social groups and drop-in centres in Braintree (a lunch club and a life skills group), Halstead, Witham and Great Yeldham.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Date.....

To (Insurance Company).....

Re. (Policy Number).....

Dear Sir or Madam,

I intend to undertake voluntary work and, from time to time, I will use my vehicle to carry passengers or to carry out other duties, as requested. I will receive a mileage allowance for these journeys to cover the running costs of my vehicle in accordance with Section 1(4) of the Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981, which exempts me from both Passenger Service Vehicle and Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Car licensing laws. Such expenses will be claimed strictly on a non-profit basis.

I should be grateful if you would confirm that my existing policy covers me for such volunteer driving - please use the "tear off" slip below. Please also confirm that my insurance policy contains a clause indemnifying the agencies with which I am a volunteer against third party claims arising out of the use of my vehicle for such voluntary work.

Yours faithfully

(Policyholder)

From (Insurance Company).....

Re. (Policy Number).....

Policy Holder/Driver.....

This is to confirm that your insurance policy covers voluntary driving (for which a mileage allowance may be received). This also confirms that the above policy contains a clause indemnifying the agencies with which you are a volunteer against third party claims arising from the use of the vehicle on such voluntary work.



Issued by.....Date.....

