

Report to Local Council's Liaison Committee



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Date of meeting: 10 July 2014

Subject: Questions and Answers Community Agents Essex

**Officer contact for further information:
Democratic Services:**

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

To note the report regarding Community Agents Essex.

Report:

What is the Community Agents Essex scheme?

The Community Agents Essex scheme for older people is a new county wide approach to prevention and early intervention in adult social care.

The Community Agents Essex scheme looks to build on the learning from the Village Agents programme that worked solely in mid Essex providing support to vulnerable adults mainly aged 50+ in rural communities. Through the establishment of a network of community agents and volunteers, the Community Agents Essex scheme will manage demand on social care and health services targeting those older people and their carers most likely to require support in the near future – identified through referral by Social Care Direct, GPs and the community – and delay or divert their need by helping individuals to identify and implement solutions to the issues they face, with the support of their local networks and communities

Why is the Community Agents Essex scheme needed?

The scheme aims to manage increasing demand on health and social care. It links within the broader landscape of strengthening community resilience and mobilising communities across Essex, increasing independence and enabling residents to help and support themselves within their community. It is based on analysis of data that shows a significant number of older people contacting Social Care Direct could have been supported earlier in the community.

The Community Agents Essex scheme enables timely and effective resolution of issues, which achieves better outcomes for people in Essex and at the same time avoids escalation of need and crisis, and the associated social care costs.

So is the scheme purely about saving money?

No, it is responding to the findings of the Who Will Care Commission and the initial work

done by the Whole Essex Community Budget Programme which shows that residents want to live independently, at home, in their community for as long as possible. However, it is important to recognise that ECC needs to make financial savings and is looking at how it can deliver improved services, for less, to residents. The Community Agents Essex scheme proposes savings while delivering the support residents want.

Why did ECC propose the scheme?

Essex County Council didn't propose the scheme. The four partners (Rural Community Council of Essex, British Red Cross, Age UK and Neighbourhood Watch) proactively approached the local authority in response to the findings of the Who Will Care Commission to propose the Community Agents Essex scheme as a solution to managing demand on health and social care and voluntary sector resources. The Community Agent solution also responded to the comments from residents interviewed as part of the Who Will Care Commission about the importance of maintaining independence and independent living.

What are the links and synergies with the Who Will Care Commission?

The Community Agents Essex scheme is an integral aspect of delivering the solutions proposed by the Commission, specifically the commitments to mobilise community resources and prevent unnecessary crises for older people.

It also supports the recommendations of the Commission by supporting voluntary sector organisations to work together in a different way.

Why do you believe the partners can deliver the Community Agents programme?

The four partners are highly experienced in delivering services to vulnerable adults and communities both in Essex and nationally. They proactively approached ECC, responding to a challenge that we need to provide services differently, proposing a solution that not only encourages independence but has listened to the voice of Essex residents.

How did you choose the voluntary sector partners?

RCCE, British Red Cross, Age UK and Neighbourhood Watch approached ECC following their engagement with the Who Will Care Commission. We were impressed by their innovative solution to supporting independence and reducing impact on health and social care. Between them the charities have expertise in older people, social isolation and can be the eyes and ears needed on the ground to ensure we target those individuals who will benefit from support while at the same time reducing dependence on the state

What is Essex County Council's involvement in the scheme?

One of the main things to note about the scheme is that while ECC will fund the scheme in full for three years, funding will be reduced in years four and five. The partners will be expected to produce a sustainable funding strategy, identifying other long term funding sources including charitable donations, grant-giving philanthropic organisations and potential social investment. This is consistent with the key messages of the Who Will Care Commission, which advised that charities should have a range of funding streams and become less reliant on public sector funding.

It will be delivered through a new voluntary sector partnership, bringing together four of the largest voluntary sector organisations in Essex: Rural Community Council of Essex; British Red Cross; Age UK and Neighbourhood Watch. It won't be a service delivered and owned by ECC and in part this decision reflects the need to change the expectations of our communities that in future the local authority won't necessarily be able to provide support for them.

How many people will benefit from Community Agents Essex?

It is expected, once fully established that the scheme will support 6,000 people per year, helping them gain and regain independent living skills and enabling them to find their own solutions. Approximately 3,000 of these referrals will come from Social Care, the other from GP referrals and targeted outreach

Where will the scheme run?

The scheme will run county wide – targeting both rural and urban communities. Individuals will be referred by social care, GPs and through targeted outreach.

How many Community Agents will there be?

The scheme will consist of 36 Community Agents with 72 aligned Volunteers who will cover each district of Essex and be mapped to demand. Additionally the model will be supported by the Age UK Voice Network and at a local level by Neighbourhood Watch volunteers.

When will the scheme start?

Recruitment of the Community Agents begins following a Key Decision in April with Agents in place in June ready for Phase 1 of the project to begin in July; this would see the first cohort

of Community Agents making initial contacts with the community. All the network of volunteers and Agents would be in place by September which would see the scheme working to build up to full delivery and capacity and starting to take referrals in October 2014.

What are the main differences between Village Agents and Community Agents?

The Community Agents Essex scheme differs from the Village Agents programme in respect that it is not only more targeted to a specific cohort of residents and their carers and will be implemented county wide, but the emphasis of the scheme will be to support people to find their own solutions. The model starts with the individual and how they can support themselves. The Community Agents will focus on outcomes, building confidence in individuals to own their own solutions and become self-reliant rather than dependent.

What do you mean when you say the model starts with the individual?

Community Agents will support people to find their own solutions from within their own networks and communities.

What about the organisations already working in this field?

We would encourage organisations to talk to the Community Agents and the delivery partners. We can only work together if we share information and communicate. The four voluntary sector partners saw a way they could respond to the needs of Essex residents, improving outcomes and supporting independence and came to us with a proposal. We expect the Community Agents to offer a facilitative and solution finding service, not a care provision. We expect them to make links with community resources and activity in their local areas, finding and encouraging reciprocal support for individuals. The key difference in the Community Agents approach is that they are working to support an individual's confidence and understanding, enabling them to carry on managing their own lives. The Community Agents will not be providing a care and support service, but where necessary, they will link people in or refer them to other services when they identify a need.

The Community Agents Essex scheme offers a consistent framework across the county; and the support they offer will be consistent and personalised to the needs of the individual. The solutions people access will depend on the wide range of possible responses in their local areas.

Will the Community Agents Essex scheme not end up duplicating work at a local level?

Absolutely not, if anything the Community Agents Essex scheme will help sustain local community projects as Agents will look for community solutions to support an individual's needs. In many cases people aren't aware of the support on their doorstep; the Community Agents can help individuals understand what support exists, they can help them sift through the amount of information available and talk through the options. Understanding the options available and making informed decisions helps increase confidence and gives people an increased sense of capability and ownership.

How much is the Community Agents Essex scheme costing?

The implementation of the scheme is costing £600,000 per year for three years, reducing to £400,000 in year 4 and £200,000 in year five; however it is expected that the scheme will save circa £2m by reducing, or delaying people's need for social care support.

How do I become a Community Agent or become a volunteer?

Community Agents will be employed by the delivery partnership and recruitment will begin from April. They will be supported by a network of volunteers – the delivery partners will also advertise for volunteering roles from April.