

Long Melford Good Neighbour Scheme



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What people say about the Good Neighbour Scheme in Long Melford

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The Long Melford Good Neighbour Scheme was a hive of activity when we visited in January 2020.

More than 40 people gathered in the United Reformed Church community room for coffee, cake and conversation.

The scheme began in 2011, although an earlier version of it began in 2009, and there are around 40 volunteers.

700 calls were received last year, a 40% increase on the previous year, with requests to help with a range of tasks including social activities, accessing health appointments and shopping.

The scheme prides itself on being able to respond to emergencies,

such as getting to an x-ray appointment or dealing with a problem at home.

One lady was placed in a care home temporarily after her house flooded. When she called in distress, volunteers drove her and her belongings to the home to settle her in and continued to visit throughout her stay and resettle her when she returned home.

In total, 11 volunteers supported her over two weeks, but only the actual drives appear in the logbook. Long Melford Good Neighbours go the extra mile.

Here's a summary of the feedback people shared with us on our visit:

What Clients Say

"The Good Neighbour Scheme is the main reason I stayed living in the village after my husband died. We'd lived a little further out, but I was going back and forth and it was too far to get here.

The volunteers are very kind, they've helped me put in lightbulbs, but they also help with computers and gardening, or give people lifts to the hospital. I really don't know what we'd do without them."

"Everybody needs somebody at some point, don't they? The Good Neighbour Scheme was a godsend before my mum died. They helped me keep up with the house, took me to hospital to visit and they let me borrow a phone so I could keep in touch about mum's health and appointments."

"When something happens, my first thought is I should call my daughter, but she's at work and I shouldn't; really disturb her. So I call Good Neighbours instead and they help out with whatever it is.

It makes me to feel independent and more confident about living on my own. It's so important to provide activities for people like me who are elderly and need support."

"I was living alone on a farm and I hadn't realised how isolated I'd become. I had my shopping delivered, I wasn't getting out or meeting anyone. When I finally left to

move here, we got to the main road and it really struck me how modern the cars had become, I don't think I'd left for years."

"I've only been in the village a short time, but I heard about the Good Neighbours Scheme and thought I'd pop in. I've lost my confidence a bit and this is an easy way of meeting new people.

It's good to see that Long Melford has such a strong community, you need people to rely on and you need to feel supported."

What Volunteers Say

"I've volunteered from the start and I really enjoy it. The pleasure comes from talking to people who may not have spoken to anyone for a few days and it's rewarding to see them so happy.

We help out away from the coffee morning too, if someone needs a hedge trimming or needs something from the shops, we can sort it.

We also get people to the Melford Movie night, which they enjoy. The only downside is the paperwork, it can all seem a little over the top, but I appreciate we have to protect people's privacy and make sure everyone's safe."

"I volunteer to sort out the lifts to get people here, but also to other things like doctors appointments.

Sometimes you can tell on the phone that they haven't spoken to anyone for a while. Once, we called a lady and it turned out she'd had a fall at home, but no-one knew, so we went round to help her out.

My employer releases us to do four hours volunteering a month and I'm glad I did this as it gives me a purpose and it's good for me too, it helps my mental health and I feel a part of something that makes a difference."

What works?

Long Melford GNS benefits from a large pool of volunteers and enjoys close links with other community facilities, such as the library and the churches, with a number of volunteers involved in those activities too. These connections appear to have helped the scheme become a key source of support in the village.

Find out More

Good Neighbour Schemes enable residents to develop stronger, more resilient communities where neighbours become friends and can lend a hand, look out for each other. There are 35 schemes in Suffolk, with more in development. Good Neighbour Schemes in Suffolk are led by local volunteers and supported by Community Action Suffolk, thanks to grant funding from the National Lottery Community Fund.

www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk