

Shropshire Council's Local Account – Case Study: Market Drayton Seniors' Enterprise

Four pro-active Market Drayton senior citizens came together in 2015, convinced that they could contribute to the Health and Wellbeing of some of their less advantaged peers.

Although we had our own ideas, through June- December 177 face-to-face over-50s were surveyed to identify their reasonable unmet needs. This revealed that lack of transport was, by far, the key issue as 149 respondents expressed various degrees of concern: it was of no concern to only 28 respondents. That no public transport link between Market Drayton-Whitchurch had existed for many years was a major concern for non-drivers. This revelation acted as a catalyst for liaising with North Salop Wheelers, based at Whixall, because it already operated market day rural services to get village residents into Market Drayton.

On 18 May 2016 Christine Holmes, Shropshire's High Sheriff promoted our Official Launch in the Auditorium of Festival Drayton Centre under the banner of 'A Festival of Health and Wellbeing' at which 27 Community and Support organisations were represented. This included Shropshire Rural Communities Charity to which we are indebted for support. This event attracted about 200 visitors and was followed up with four Drop-in events during June when there was greater privacy for personal issues to be discussed.

More importantly, these events lead us to the conclusion that a significant part of our future strategy will be identifying a suitable Drop-in venue from which to represent the many organisations focusing on Health and Wellbeing issues, but do not have a Market Drayton presence. The proposed arrangement might be likened to antique emporiums where one or more unit holder/s will, at any given time, represent all other unit holders. In our case, each organisation provides a volunteer to maintain a presence on a rota basis. If that volunteer cannot provide direct assistance to anyone seeking advice, the appropriate organisation will be contacted to arrange a mutually convenient local appointment - or will be signposted if that is the client's preference.

Then darker clouds came for many commuters on the 341/342 Arriva bus routes! The cross-border services linking Market Drayton with Telford via Princess Royal Hospital was being axed on 31 July. This service provided a life-line for many rural and town non-drivers of all ages needing transport to shop, get to work, medical appointments, visit in-patients and relations, make train and bus connections, attend Telford Magistrates' Court or New College Telford etc. John Harrison of North Salop Wheelers and Eric Davis of Market Drayton Seniors' Enterprise immediately engaged in many meetings with the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group and Transport Teams of Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire Councils to gain financial support to enable the best possible alternative Ring/Text-a-Ride Community Bus Project which launched 1 August. The community bus now regularly serves the

towns and villages along the North Shropshire corridor: Telford, Wellington, Princess Royal Hospital, Waters Upton, Eaton-upon-Tern, Childs Ercall, Ollerton, Stoke-on-Tern, Langley Dale, Stoke Heath, Rosehill, Tern Hill, Market Drayton – and the silver lining – embracing Whitchurch and Wem.

For more information, please contact Eric Davis, Secretary of Market Drayton Seniors' Enterprise, at ericatriverside@btinternet.com

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