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## AN INTRODUCTION TO GOOD NEIGHBOUR SCHEMES

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A National Lottery funded project.



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## What is a Good Neighbour scheme?

Good Neighbour schemes are established and run by local people to provide neighbourly support to others who may need help on an occasional or regular basis.

Volunteers are free to give as much or as little time as they like helping others with practical tasks like driving or shopping or providing emotional support (befriending). They do not offer specialist care or play any role that should be left to professional, qualified services.

All the scheme's services are free unless expenses such as petrol or parking have been incurred. Donations for running costs are usually welcomed.

The scheme mostly works through telephone contact. Coordinators receive calls for help and allocate tasks to appropriate volunteers.

The aim is to support neighbours to maintain a good quality of life, remain independent in their own homes if they wish to, and reduce their reliance on statutory health and care support systems. Schemes also provide an opportunity to build a community and an organised system for volunteering time to help others.

## Why are Good Neighbour Schemes needed?

At any point in life people find that they need a little bit of extra support, they may not have family close by or a support network they can rely on, they may lose a partner and become lonely. Good Neighbours schemes pick up the gap between formal and informal support at neighbourhood level, helping with non-critical tasks that make a huge difference to quality of life (for example a little help around the garden; picking up a prescription).

In occupying this space between formal support and individual need, Good Neighbour schemes and other similar initiatives have widely-recognised benefits:

- for the clients, who are helped to do something they would not otherwise be able to do, or only with great difficulty;
- for volunteers, who have fulfilling opportunities to contribute to the quality of life of fellow-residents in a meaningful way;
- for service providers, for whom some of the problems of declining health in the population, increasing care needs, and the logistics of appointments, are reduced;
- and for local communities generally, which are likely to experience increased levels of social cohesion, sense of belonging and trust.

# Northamptonshire ACRE Good Neighbours Schemes

In April 2020 Northamptonshire ACRE were awarded over £272,000 from the National Lottery Community Fund to establish 30 further Good Neighbour schemes in Northamptonshire.

What to expect from Northamptonshire ACRE:

- Free support and advice
- Regular network meetings
- A new networking forum (coming soon!)
- Access to a bank of resources
- A regular newsletter with funding opportunities, training and other news

You are also able to access up to £700 in funding to help with start up costs, please contact your project support field worker for more information.

As part of the lottery project we will be hiring two fieldworkers to provide support to Good Neighbours Schemes, your fieldworker will be happy to provide support and advice, don't be afraid to get in touch.

## Need and Capacity

If you are thinking about setting up a scheme, the first step is to check that there is not something similar already covering your area and then look at interest and need. You will need a core group of people to spend time on planning the scheme and finding out what local people want.

A dot matrix (poster with space for people to show their agreement with a coloured dot) is an easy way at a fete (for example) to indicate what kind of support / skills are available in the village.

A survey or questionnaire can be carried out, which gives residents the opportunity to say what service they would use if a scheme was on offer. It is also an opportunity for people to express an interest in volunteering for the scheme and say how they might be able to help. The questionnaire could be included with a local newsletter. The best way to maximize the number of responses you receive is to collect them from each household. An alternative is to leave collection boxes in local halls and shops, but this may significantly reduce the number of responses you receive. Northants Acre can provide survey templates free of charge that you can customise.

Once you have received your responses you will need to evaluate the information to assess the level of need and the number of potential volunteers. You should call a meeting of interested parties to raise awareness, add new members to your core group and field any questions that potential volunteers may have.

This would be a good opportunity to get the message across that no volunteer is expected to do everything or be available all the time.

## Example questionnaire



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### GOOD NEIGHBOUR SCHEME IN CRICK

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The Parish Council is looking into setting up a Good Neighbour Scheme in Crick. To do this we need to find out what the needs of the people living in Crick are. Please help us by filling in this short questionnaire, either on paper or online via the link on the Parish Council website. Paper copies should be handed in at the Post Office in the box

Please tell us a little about you

1. How old are you?      Under 18     18-25     25-35     35-45   
45-55     55-65     65-75     over 75

2. How long have you lived in Crick?      Less than 5 years     5-10 years   
10-15 years     15-20 years   
More than 20 years

3. Are you working, non-working, retired or a student? Please circle

4. Do you have children under 18 living with you?      Yes     No

5. How old are your children?      0-5     5-11     11-18   
Please indicate number of children of each age group

6. Do you have adult children living with you?      Yes     No

7. Do you have older family members living with you?      Yes     No

8. Which organisations are you a member of, or a user of e.g. churches, allotments, sports field? Please list all that you visit on a regular or semi-regular basis



## Consultation

This is also a good point to talk to other local organisations that might be interested in working with you, examples include Women's Institute groups, Parish Councils, Neighbourhood watches.

'Consult' with the key organisations or groups in your village early - ask to meet, explain the plan, and ask who they think should be consulted in the village - get them onside. When an official notification of groups happens later offer a short talk at each of their meetings, so they feel that they are in the know and the room is probably warmed up and on side.

## Who does your scheme serve?

It is important to be clear about who your scheme is serving, and perhaps who it might not be able to serve. You may choose not to apply the criteria strictly; but if ever you need to decline a service to someone, it might help to have a public statement that explains your decision.

The first criterion is usually geographical (for example using postcodes or parish boundaries); the second is likely to be related to the individual client's need.

It is sensible to review this definition regularly, considering levels of demand, capacity to meet demand, changes in local transport or other service provision, and the interests of funders. If the definition is changed, make sure that all promotional material is updated as soon as possible.

**With thanks to all the Good Neighbours Schemes and organisations that have contributed to this booklet.**



**Thanks also goes to the National Lottery Community Fund for funding our Good Neighbour Schemes project.**

**NLCF is the largest community funder in the UK, awarding money raised by National Lottery players to communities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Since June 2004, over 200,000 grants and over £9 billion have been awarded to projects that have benefited millions of people.**

# Northamptonshire ACRE

(Action with Communities in Rural England).



We are a countywide, independent charitable organization working with rural communities in Northamptonshire to improve their quality of life, especially the disadvantaged.

Other booklets in this series:

- Booklet 1: An introduction to GNS and establishing need
- Booklet 2: Setting up a scheme
- Booklet 3: Roles and managing volunteers
- Booklet 4: Promoting your scheme
- Booklet 5: Finance and sustainability
- Booklet 6: Evaluation
- Booklet 7: What to do if things go wrong!

## Contact Us

If you would like more information about Good Neighbour Schemes, need an electronic copy of this booklet, or have any other queries or questions please contact us using the information below.

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