

South West Villages Reporting Form

Friday, 16 June 2017

Reporting on activity and outcomes 7/2/17 – 20/09/17



Deadline: 2017
Organisation: Eric Liddell Centre
Case Study: South West Villages Project
Project Staffing: 0.8 FTE

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THE VISION

The South West Villages of Balerno, Currie and Juniper Green have 1200 residents over the age of 75, in a total population of 13 000. At 9.2% of the population, the percentage of people over 75 in this area is higher than in Edinburgh as a whole (7%) and the whole of Scotland (8.2%). It is expected that numbers of people aged over 75% will rise in Scotland over the coming decades and this will therefore especially affect the South West Villages. The Pentlands Medical Centre admits 3000 people into hospital every year, and it felt that many cases are caused by reasons beyond health concerns alone, such as social isolation. Additionally, it has been identified that there are long delays in providing care at home to individuals who require it in these villages, due to a lack of carers living in the area or carers being unwilling to travel to the outer villages. Further, “within ... Currie, Balerno and Juniper Green, it is known that while there are high numbers of people who want to make sure that older people are well taken care of, the establishment of new organisations is quite challenging due to the smaller population sizes” (Talking About Later Life in Edinburgh report, EVOC, 2017).

It was felt that the needs of some individuals could be met by social interventions provided by the local community and third sector organisations, mirroring national data on the issue (Age UK and Campaign to End Loneliness report 2015). Loneliness and social isolation have been considered by the Scottish Government’s Equal Opportunities Committee, who advocate creating a more strategic approach across services towards tackling loneliness, and Edinburgh’s Joint Commissioning Plan for Older People sets out commitments to build stronger links between statutory services, the third sector and communities, and to shift the balance of care in to the community so that older people can remain independent for longer. It also plans to reduce loneliness by providing support for older people to engage in social activities.

Based on this rationale, the South West Villages Project’s (SWVP) overarching goals were for older people to be better supported by informal community connections and voluntary services, thereby reducing loneliness and its associated negative health consequences. This ought to improve older individuals’ independence, minimise the reliance on statutory services and provide unpaid carers with some respite. SWVP was a research project to identify ways these overall goals could be achieved, and make recommendations for future projects and practice in this Final Report. Research was to include mapping existing voluntary and community services and activities and the links between those services, while identifying gaps and limitations and gathering opinions from local older people about their needs and wishes. Through this research the project was in a position to raise awareness of loneliness amongst older people across the broader population, optimising community engagement and building community capacity to aid social activity for older people. Additionally, through meetings with Health and Social Care professionals it was hoped that links could be improved between statutory services, voluntary organisations and the community.

Specific intended outputs included:

- Increased numbers of local volunteers working with older people
- Engagement with local people
- Improve links between service providers and community groups
- Decreased unnecessary hospital admissions
- Influence the development of future services with a new understanding of services in the area

Given the Eric Liddell Centre’s history in provision of services and resources for community groups, people with dementia and carers of people with dementia, the SWVP was deemed to fit well with the Centre’s ethos and other activities.

The Health and Social Care Partnership Integrated Joint Board granted the Eric Liddell Centre £20 000 to complete this work. A Community Liaison Officer was employed on a part-time basis.

ACTIVITIES: WHAT YOU ACTUALLY DID

A baseline evaluation was conducted to assess levels of loneliness and social isolation, based on the Making it Clear questionnaire and other scales reviewed by The Campaign to End Loneliness. Respondents were also asked where they find out about local activities and whether they would like to know more about what is going on in their area. These questionnaires were targeted at:

- members of existing groups and clubs
- people who receive care at home through collaboration with Edinburgh Council and four private care providers
- people who use the library home delivery service
- residents of sheltered housing
- residents identified by members of the community

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes were contacted and used as a means of identifying people at risk of loneliness and social isolation and delivering information about the project to those individuals who could choose to respond. A Volunteer Neighbourhood Connector scheme was piloted by SWVP whereby local residents identified people they had concerns about and passed on information about SWVP. This was discussed with, and supported by, Community Councils, local residents and Neighbourhood Watch Scotland, members of which have delivered leaflets in their neighbourhood.

71 responses to the questionnaire were received. The results did not suggest high levels of perceived loneliness, however this is likely a reflection of the fact that the majority of respondents were approached via social groups, and are therefore less likely to be experiencing social isolation. Only a small number of responses were received from individuals targeted through care at home providers, but these scores did suggest higher incidence of loneliness amongst this population group.

The response rate and results from the questionnaire highlight the challenges faced when attempting to measure loneliness and social isolation. SWVP found that many individuals did not feel that the questionnaire was relevant to them and chose not to complete it. One lady gave back the blank form saying “this is not for me, I’ve still got my husband”.

Relying on other organisations, such as care providers, to target harder to reach individuals places additional work on staff within those organisations, potentially explaining low response rates.

A mapping exercise was conducted to identify the existing services in the area for people aged 65+. These services were identified through: internet searches; local magazines; community centres; consulting the public about activities they attend; and sharing knowledge with relevant colleagues and staff at other organisations. Organisations based in the SW villages were asked about the service they provided, what links they had with other organisations and what limitations they experienced. SWVP met with staff and unpaid volunteers who run existing groups and organisations, including:

- local senior citizens who volunteer on the committees of seniors clubs, walking groups and the Scottish Women’s Rural Institute
- members of church congregations who offer lunch clubs and friendship guilds
- day care coordinators
- dementia-specific day care leaders
- Community Education departments at Currie and Balerno High Schools
- libraries
- schools

SWVP also spoke with organisations who provide activities for older people in other parts of Edinburgh with a view to identifying popular and successful projects which could be extended in to the South West villages. These organisations included Fit for Life (an exercise group run by NHS Lothian), Be Able (a course for people diagnosed with dementia aimed at maintaining and increasing independence), Edinburgh Leisure's Ageing Well and Steady Steps programmes and several befriending services, volunteering organisations and time-banking groups.

Discussions have been held with local social groups, residents of sheltered housing and members of the public in places such as libraries, bus stops and outside polling stations. Over 250 older people in the South West villages have engaged in discussion. Participants were encouraged through open questions to give their opinions on local service provision and unmet needs or difficulties faced in accessing social activity. From these talks, along with meetings with service providers and community group leaders, several themes emerged which directed the activities of the SWVP.

Availability of Social Opportunities

General opinion at social groups and the general public was that there are lots of social activities in the area for people who wanted to go to them and were able to get out. It was mentioned by community members in 11 of 25 group and one-to-one discussions, that "there's lots of activities and groups in the area". This was especially the case in Balerno and Currie, and amongst members of church congregations, but in discussions with Juniper Green residents, some individuals reported believing that "there is nothing going on here". Some residents of Sheltered Housing in Juniper Green raised the desire to have evening activities in the communal hall attached to the housing, which could include games and exercise. It was raised that many social groups stop in summertime, leaving a "gap" for many individuals (see "summer" section below).

Dementia Day Care Centres are an area which could be strengthened to meet demand, as some are currently at capacity and operate waiting lists. The capacity is set by venue size and availability of volunteers, without whom the services could not run. There is a lot of crossover between these services with several members attending more than one of them. Some members of these groups said they would like more days at the dementia day care services, with one member of the Beacon Club in Juniper Green claiming "I wish it was more than once a week". One dementia day care centre held in Wester Hailes which accepts members from the South West villages, currently has empty places due to delays in diagnosing potential members. The recent employment of a Dementia Development Worker by Dementia Friendly Pentlands (DFP) following funding from the Life Changes Trust is a positive step in the improvement of dementia services. SWVP discussed a link with DFP, perhaps for picking up individuals who are ineligible for DFP services but who would benefit from a link with LOOPs.

Awareness of Social Opportunities

The questionnaire asked respondents where they found out about social activities. Responses were as follows:

- word of mouth, family and friends (54%)
- local magazines such as Currie and Balerno News and Konect (37%)
- leaflets displayed in libraries, the medical centre, cafes and posted through the door (22%)
- noticeboards such as community council boards and display boards in libraries, cafes and shops (18%)
- directly from a GP (10%)

Despite most respondents claiming they "agreed" with the statement that they "feel well-informed about local groups, activities and services" many individuals provided contact details and requested to be sent more information about opportunities as it becomes available. These individuals have been added to a mailing list and have been contacted with relevant information and to invite them to events. It emerged during discussions that there are many social activities in the area that people do not know about. As an unexpected outcome of these discussions

some individuals have joined new clubs. While local magazines advertise various events in their “What’s On” guides, there exist several additional activities and clubs not featured in these guides. In one example a local resident said “I lived here for years without knowing that this class was on, then one day I found out and I wish I’d known years ago”.

SWVP has created a directory of activities, services and clubs for older people, specific to Balerno, Currie and Juniper Green. This will be distributed amongst local venues and care providers for dissemination to residents. It was discussed with Juniper Green Community Council’s Resilient Communities sub-committee about creating a directory with all services for all age groups to give to new residents moving to the area. This is a big piece of work which could be collaborated on or outsourced.

Summer

It was raised by several community members that most formal social groups (not including dementia-specific groups) stopped for summer, leaving a space in the social calendars of many older residents. To satisfy this need a series of social events were organised by SWVP throughout the summer months. These included three structured events in a community venue where popular group Young at Heart already takes place and weekly less formal coffee meetings in local cafes. These events involved volunteers for assistance with serving coffee, chatting to attendees, setting up the venue, walking with unconfident individuals to the meeting and leading craft activities. Events were advertised at existing social groups and disseminated through relevant channels such as LOOPs, and advertised in local magazines, the venues to be used and directly to individuals who had joined a mailing list. Volunteers include community members who were already active volunteers in existing social clubs as well as newly recruited individuals and people who were volunteering through other charities.

The summer events were well attended, with an average of 11 attendees at each session. Attendance dropped at one of the cafés as it was considered to be “too cramped”, bringing the average attendance down. The biggest group was 18 people. Feedback also raised the issue of portion size in cafés, with smaller portions preferred, and noise, with attendees favouring quieter venues without lots of children.

While many older members of the community state that “having a chat” is their favourite part of a social event, there is a sub-group for whom this is not suitable. Some community members have expressed their desire for more participatory activities, such as exercise classes or being entertained by musicians. One man said “I like more activity than sitting chatting – let’s be honest we’re not all out doing exciting things so we don’t have much to talk about”. Attendees at the Young at Heart sessions reported that the quiz, reminiscence and musical entertainment were enjoyable. After an exercise session and musical entertainment one gentleman said “it’s good to do an activity together as it gives us something to talk about”. Other people have said that they would like their mind to be stimulated, which would lend itself more to clubs such as the Probus Clubs, which are currently at capacity and not taking any new members.

Volunteers

It was identified through discussion that these groups rely heavily, or in some cases entirely, on volunteers. Some groups who provide a once-weekly day care service for people living in the three villages employ one member of staff on a part-time basis to coordinate activities, but they rely heavily on volunteers, stating they “would not be able to function without volunteers”. Many other social clubs open to any older residents are managed entirely by volunteers, in some cases a core committee and in other cases a rotating group of helpers. Many of the active volunteers are retired which allows them to be available during working hours, but can also present problems – one group coordinator stated “we could use more volunteers as our existing volunteers are older themselves – we need drivers under 70 for the insurance”.

Social groups who rely on volunteers advertise for help in local magazines, in particular the Currie and Balerno News, and on posters displayed in shops and cafes. Word of mouth is a commonly used method for recruiting volunteers, for example existing volunteers bring friends along to help and members of church congregations hear about what the churches offer and volunteer to help.

For most of these social groups attendees pay a small fee of a few pounds to cover some of the costs such as venue hire, refreshments and transport, but this would not cover any salaries.

SWVP also liaised with city-wide and national third sector organisations who offer services for older people across Edinburgh and rely on volunteers, including:

- befriending services
- the volunteer centre
- volunteer drivers
- library home delivery service
- library link service
- physical fitness sessions
- telephone helplines
- foot care services

These organisations utilise more formal methods of recruitment such as adverts on websites, membership of Volunteer Edinburgh and leaflets in public places. Some of the bigger organisations attend the Edinburgh Volunteer Recruitment Fair every year, however the cost of this is prohibitive for some smaller groups. The local volunteer for national organisation Contact the Elderly advised that for them most interest in volunteering comes from social media and online searches. This may not be suitable for small, local groups who do not have a presence on social media, or who are trying to target volunteers who may not use IT. The majority of city-wide and national befriending services spoken with reported not having enough volunteers in the SW villages to satisfy demand from service users, and some organisations are not accepting any new referrals in these areas. Even a private care at home provider who offers befriending services reports struggling to find people living in the area who want to do care work on a paid basis. Another private care provider stated “this area has a lot of unmet needs”.

Having identified through discussion with groups and organisations that volunteers are vital, and particularly those groups who provide a befriending service are short on volunteers, a Community Engagement event was hosted on the 20th of April 2017 providing an opportunity for organisations to recruit new volunteers from the area. The event was intended to offer a social element as well as information provision and brought together different community groups such as primary school children, service users and potential volunteers. Relevant organisations and groups were invited to use the event as a promotional opportunity. The event was advertised in local magazines and via posters in shops and community notice boards. Formal services including Edinburgh Council, Community Councils and the Pentland Neighbourhood Partnership promoted the event on notice boards, social media platforms and e-newsletters. Partners such as LOOPs disseminated information on the event to relevant networks. Leaflets were displayed in libraries, shops and GP practices as well as handed out directly to members of groups visited. Through various streams of promotion other relevant service providers contacted SWVP to request a stall at the event. A second, smaller volunteer fayre was held in Balerno on the 30th of August, with organisations offering a variety of different volunteering opportunities to appeal to individuals with different interests and time constraints. The event was advertised locally but was poorly attended by members of the public. However, positive links were made between service providers and as a result it was arranged for organisations to hold awareness raising stalls in the local community café.

The SWVP was promoted in an article in the Currie and Balerno News which was also used as a resource for advertising for volunteers. Volunteers were also sought by working with other charities who have volunteers in the local area, such as ArtLink and Community Connecting.

Transport

The need for transport for pursuing social activity and attending appointments was mentioned during 20 of the 25 separate discussions with individuals and groups in the community. It was noted on several occasions that the amount of social activities available are only relevant if one is able to get out of the house and travel to these activities either independently or with assistance. One resident stated "I'm lucky, I can walk and I have family to help me, but some folk aren't so lucky". The daughter of a local resident who uses a wheelchair said "Mum can only go anywhere if I take her. It's great that these activities happen but if I'm busy she'll just sit in the house for days". Another lady with mobility issues requires support with travel and stated "I only get out to this [social club] and two days shopping".

The recent withdrawal of two local bus routes operated by E&M Horsburgh and Waverley Travel, which had been funded by West Lothian Council and City of Edinburgh Council, was a common theme, especially the service which went to St John's hospital in Livingston where patients are being referred to by Pentland Medical Centre. Individuals report having to get two buses which takes a long time, or paying £20 each way to get to the hospital by taxi. Currie Kirk offers a hospital appointment transport scheme serviced by volunteers. The withdrawal of the Livingston bus and the bus to the Gyle shopping centre pose a problem for individuals wanting to access shopping centres. Currently Dial-a-Bus offers a once weekly service to the Gyle but users claim it doesn't give them enough time at the centre. From communication with Handicabs (who run Dial-a-bus) there is capacity to offer more services in the area if people will use them. Previous requests have been made from residents of the South West Villages, however actual uptake has been limited. Awareness raising of the service may help increase usage. Lothian Buses are currently considering the possibility of extending one service to Currie which may assist with getting to the Gyle, however in recent correspondence they stated "services must be commercially viable and sustainable over the longer term", and it seems that a bus to Livingston is unlikely to be viable.

Several individuals said they would only attend events if someone could offer them a lift, and they only go out when a family member drives them as they require door-to-door transport. Even mobile individuals mentioned wanting someone to accompany them to places for reasons such as failing eyesight, memory loss, low confidence, busy roads being difficult to cross and uneven surfaces.

Having identified that the withdrawal of local bus routes is of particular concern to the community, West Lothian Council and City of Edinburgh Council who previously subsidised these routes were contacted, as were the companies who operated the services (Waverley Travel and E and M Horsburgh) and Lothian Buses, with regards reasons for service withdrawal and potential solutions. All three Community Councils in the South West villages have been active in campaigning for reinstatement of bus routes, and Juniper Green Community Council met with Lothian Buses to consider possible extensions of existing services to improve the access to Livingston from the villages. SWVP met with a Service Manager from Edinburgh Council to discuss the needs and possible solutions in the area. SWVP hosted a Community Engagement event with a focus on transport, which was attended by nearly 100 community members, mostly older people. This provided an opportunity to discuss the needs in the area and hear from the Service Manager from Edinburgh Council responsible for the city's community transport schemes and a representative from Handicabs who offer a Dial-a-Bus service.

A survey was carried out on opinion in the area, receiving over 250 responses from people of all ages. The survey was distributed in paper format as well as online with assistance from the Pentland Neighbourhood Partnership. A report of the findings was written and disseminated to all four Pentlands Ward Councillors and the Convenor of the Environment and Transport Committee. SWVP discussed the results with Councillors, one of whom commented on it in the September issue of the Currie and Balerno News and stated his intention to continue discussions with relevant council staff.

Transport is also essential for people who attend day centres, including people with a diagnosis of dementia. Currently some groups make use of Council funded community transport services operating across the city, while other use minibuses owned by local organisations such as Currie Kirk and Scouts Scotland, relying on volunteer drivers.

Befriending

Although befrienders have not been mentioned as a requirement very often in discussions with older residents, the issue has been raised by service providers and family members of older people. It is likely that the older people with whom SWVP has come in to contact with are the more able individuals who are socially active and do not therefore feel they need a befriender. The LOOPs Community Wellbeing Team Liaison Worker stated that individuals rarely ask for a befriending service until it is suggested to them, presumably because of the stigma and potential embarrassment attached to this. Amongst care providers, pastoral visitors, relatives of local residents and third sector organisations who provide befriending services, the sense is that there is a need for befrienders in the area. One private care service manager said that carers do not have the time to provide a befriending service or take clients out, but staff regularly report concerns about the lack of social interaction available for their clients. The Pastoral Care Coordinator at Balerno Parish Church emphasised the importance of having befrienders in place *before* someone has an emergency such as a bereavement or an illness. This highlights the reactive nature of many befriending services whereas having a social network in place could delay the need for statutory service provision.

A forum was attended with representatives from other organisations who provide befriending services across the city, as an opportunity to network and for the SWVP to seek advice on the challenges and successes of befriending. Several of the befriending services operating in the SW villages are currently not taking any referrals from these areas as they have a waiting list and a shortage of volunteers, showing there is a need for this service and a need for increasing community capacity. Organisations who offer befriending services were invited to a volunteer recruitment day held by SWVP to increase the numbers of local people volunteering with older people in the area. Some service providers and Eric Liddell Centre colleagues have expressed the value in *paid* befriending roles, although the huge financial implication of this is noted.

SWVP met with Home Instead, a private care provider who offer befriending services. Discussion included recruitment of local people to be paid befrienders, with clients using Direct Payments for this service. Information on local venues and community issues was shared to assist Home Instead to hold a recruitment event in the South West Villages.

It was mentioned at the SW Voluntary Sector Forum that often an older person looking for a befriender can benefit from becoming a befriender themselves, helping someone else and receiving interaction.

Bank Closures

As is the case nationally, bank branches have been closed in the SW villages. The remaining one in Juniper Green is due to close and cease the provision of the cash machine. This has been raised as an issue in 11 discussions and poses large practical problems for older residents who rely on cash transactions. One lady said "Mum pays the cleaner with cash, which she gets from [the ATM] across the road. When that's gone I'll have to bring her cash". The bank closures have been cited by several people as reducing the already small amount of social interaction that some older people engage in. The topic is being discussed by the Community Councils in the area and alternatives solutions such as mobile banks or a bank in the Post Office are being researched by the Community Councils. Recently Juniper Green Community Council held a meeting to explain the possibility of a fully licensed and Financial Conduct Authority guaranteed community bank with a fully Financial Services Compensation Scheme in place, and is asking local businesses to back it.

Communal Spaces

The importance of a safe, communal space was raised in several discussions, in particular amongst residents at sheltered housing. One of the sheltered housing providers in Balerno was recently required to sell off its communal

lounge building to a developer, which has left a gap in social interaction opportunities amongst residents who used to have regular coffee mornings there. The sheltered housing in Juniper Green maintains a well-used communal hall and residents state the benefits offered by this. This space is rented out to external groups but is free to use for the residents, some of whom suggested they would enjoy evening activities there such as games and exercise sessions, and being attached to the housing is beneficial since many older people stated they “don’t go out at night”.

Juniper Green Village Hall, owned by City of Edinburgh Council, was recently closed for refurbishment, which affected various social groups. Some groups moved to alternative premises, but other groups stopped during this time. Community members stated liking the space and being pleased that it is now reopened as they feel it is important to have a venue they know and feel safe in. There is a sizeable following on Facebook for the hall and the activities available.

It has been pointed out that Juniper Green does not have a library or Community High School with facilities which both Balerno and Currie do, offering rooms for meetings and clubs. Recently the Juniper Green Community has bought an old toilet block which they intend to turn in to a community space for projects including intergenerational work.

Balerno and Currie both have community centres owned by City of Edinburgh Council, as well as halls and meeting rooms attached to churches which can be hired. Additionally cafés can reserve tables for community meetings. All three villages have a Scout Hall available, and Balerno and Currie High Schools have facilities. Of course some of these venues require payment which some residents are unwilling to organise should “not enough people turn up” to an event.

Balerno Parish church offered the use of its hall for free for sessions run by SWVP through the summer under the name of the existing Young at Heart group, and Balerno Community Centre waived the hire fee for a volunteer recruitment event.

Local cafés have been very welcoming for coffee afternoons arranged by SWVP, and feedback from attendees highlights the preference for a large space which is not too noisy.

Opportunities for Appropriately-Pitched Physical Activity Classes

While opportunities for physical activity were only mentioned by a small number of individuals as a priority when asked about what they would like to have available in the area, it did appear to be of interest after some further research. For example, at the Third Age Activities Fayre, Edinburgh Leisure reported enough interest in a gentle exercise class to run a taster session in association with Currie Day Centre, with the intention that staff and volunteers at the Day Centre would continue this on a weekly basis. Further, after some gentle exercise sessions hosted by SWVP through the summer, feedback was very positive and participants cited the desire for more of these to encourage them to stay active and independent. One gentleman stated “exercise is overlooked as we get older” and after a gentle exercise session another attendee said “I like the exercise and relaxation – I wish I could do that every day”. Another resident, recently diagnosed with dementia, stated “I used to do lots of yoga but I’ve lost that a bit now. I need more support than a regular class”.

SWVP spoke with the Coordinator and members of a physical activity class specifically for people with a diagnosis of dementia in South Edinburgh, which is run by NHS Lothian and has won awards. While this class runs at capacity and shows improvements in attendees’ fitness and function by the end of the 12-week block, there are no plans for expanding the class to other areas, nor for a follow-on option other than classes catering for the general public. The Coordinator sees this as a wasted opportunity as participants are likely to stop doing any activity again after the 12-week block.

The Coordinator of one of the day centres (for people without a diagnosis of dementia) received a session from Edinburgh Leisure on how to run a chair-based exercise session, however she does not feel confident running this without support and feels there is not enough preparation time to do this. There are also concerns over insurance

for teaching exercise sessions as instructors ought to be properly trained and insured, which costs a significant sum of money.

There are several walking groups in the area, pitched to suit various levels including a very short “turtle walk” for the most frail and Pentland Ramblers for full day hikes. With a variety of walking routes in the villages this could be encouraged as an activity to suit everyone. Some years ago Balerno High School participated in an intergenerational walk, which received positive feedback and could be something to develop as a regular activity.

Foot Care

While not raised as an issue immediately by any individuals, when the topic of foot care was proposed by SWVP in discussions with community members, it became clear that it can pose a problem. Until recently a podiatrist attended Balerno Pharmacy on a weekly basis to offer a nail-cutting service, and this has not been replaced. Attendees at that discussion were made aware of the Eric Liddell Centre’s Caring Soles Project.

Links between and within third sector and community groups and statutory services

Given the Health and Social Care Partnership’s intention to shift the balance of care from statutory services to the community and third sector, the link between the local Medical Practices and social activities is an obvious area to investigate. From a survey with older community members, GPs were cited as a source of information about social activities by only 10% of respondents. This clearly has a great deal of potential for using GPs as an information source or to signpost to organisations such as LOOPS. A meeting was held at Pentland Medical Centre with GPs from the three local surgeries covering the South West villages to discuss the impact of loneliness on primary health care and the benefits of social prescribing, with the outcome of GPs being made aware of the LOOPS Phonenumber, to which they could refer patients for whom social activity could be beneficial. Interestingly some GPs present were not aware of the LOOPS Phonenumber, despite LOOPS having sent cards to every health centre in Edinburgh, highlighting a need for raising awareness of LOOPS services. On a follow-up conversation some months after the initial meeting, a GP at Pentland Medical Centre claimed the Phonenumber information is probably not being given to patients very often, as “like lots of things it has probably fallen off our radar again”. This GP is keen to strengthen referral to LOOPS services and arrangements have been made for the LOOPS Community Navigator to meet with GPs.

Currently a Link Worker programme is being rolled out across Edinburgh following successful pilot schemes, whereby a worker is placed within a Health Centre to signpost individuals to relevant services, however it is expected that Pentlands Medical Centre will not be given a Link Worker since the area is not an area of multiple deprivation. The benefits of basing Link Workers within health centres has been highlighted by EVOC as “the most effective approach”, and emphasises the importance of having workers based in Health Centres to remind GPs about this service (Community Activity Mentors: An evaluation from inception to established role). SWVP has raised the topic of the benefits a Link Worker could offer to the Pentlands Medical Centre serving South West Villages residents.

SWVP came across confusion amongst service providers about the various LOOPS roles and referral pathways. There is scope to clarify and thereby strengthen referral streams to ensure individuals are given the most appropriate assistance.

The LOOPS Community Navigator holds a stall in Currie Library on a fortnightly basis however monitoring data provided by the manager of that project suggests this service is not well utilised. SWVP and the Community Navigator have discussed potential sites for an information stall which might experience higher footfall and the Community Navigator is now targeting supermarkets and medical centres.

SWVP met with a Service Manager from the South West Locality and as a result a link has been created between the LOOPS Community Navigator and community nurses, who can complete referral forms for clients they think would

benefit from input from the Community Navigator. This is being discussed in the near future at a Service Managers meeting to ensure all staff understand the referral system.

A link has been established between SWVP and Currie Primary School, who are keen to work on intergenerational projects. A group of pupils sang at the SWVP Third Age Activities Fayre, and an IT Training course is being offered whereby pupils will teach older people how to use tablets and computers. The school is also inviting local older people in to help the youngest children with reading practice. The same pupils have been offered training by Alzheimer's Scotland in Dementia Awareness following a discussion between Alzheimer's Scotland and SWVP. Juniper Green Primary School is already actively involved in intergenerational projects and keen to have the assistance of SWVP to strengthen this area of work. Currie High School has been approached to work on collaborative projects and it is anticipated that future collaboration will be possible in the form of a community gardening project coordinated by the Head Boy.

SWVP sat on meetings as part of the Dementia Friendly Pentlands Planning Group, a project which had already been in existence and in collaboration with Community Councils from Balerno, Currie and Juniper Green and Volunteer Edinburgh, recently secured a grant from the Life Changes Trust to employ a Dementia Development Worker who will operate from a Hub (initially Currie Library, but liable to change to a venue most useful for the community). It was proposed that anyone who approaches Dementia Friendly Pentlands for assistance, but who does not have a diagnosis of dementia could be referred to SWVP or LOOPs. This relationship will be developed once the Dementia Friendly Pentlands Development Worker is in post.

SWVP attended a meeting with the Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership Health and Wellbeing Action Group, for whom loneliness and older people's services is an area of concern and action, and a LOOPs meeting for the South West locality.

A Locality Improvement Plan is being drafted by the South West Locality Leadership Team, and SWVP has contributed comments based on the findings of the project to the Improvement Plan authors, specifically on the topics of the Link Worker/Community Navigator scheme and transport.

SWVP promoted its work through various streams, including: article and adverts in local magazines; posters on Community Council noticeboards; posters in cafes, shops, community centres, libraries, and church halls; the Eric Liddell website; community council social media pages; and directly to relevant contacts. Other organisations have been helpful in disseminating information via e-news bulletins through relevant networks.

There has been a great deal of support for the South West Villages Project, with local businesses and libraries helping to disseminate information, and cafes offering special deals for coffee afternoons arranged by the project. The Mill Café provided cakes free of charge for an event and various individuals volunteered their time to help setting up and cleaning at events.

At the Activities Fayre and Volunteer Fayre held by SWVP, a major benefit reported by stallholders was that of meeting staff from other organisations. Some individuals pointed out that "it is useful to be able to tell our service users about other services". Several organisations had not heard about other service providers, even national older people's charities. Some representatives of organisations had never previously been to the South West villages, despite their organisation operating in the area, and this was reported as being useful.

Knowledge of Support Services

Questionnaire results imply that local older people perceive themselves to be well-informed about health and social care services as well as community groups, however it might be the case that when someone needs specific assistance or in the case of a crisis they are not sure where to turn. In one example, a Currie resident, whose wife was recently diagnosed with dementia, claimed "I don't know what is available for me [as a carer]". Another couple, one of whom has recently been diagnosed with dementia, contacted SWVP after being passed through multiple services trying to find out about local activities. During discussions with community members word of mouth is cited

as the main method of finding out about available services. Access to information on available services could be an area to be strengthened. With only 10% of questionnaire responses citing the GP as a source of information on services and activities, there is room for improvement to maximise the potential of the Medical Centre as a source of information. There is also scope for LOOPs services to be promoted to raise awareness as many older people had not heard of LOOPs, despite magazines being placed in libraries and local cafes. Other people had heard of LOOPs but there exists confusion regarding the different services available and how to access them. The potential creation of a SW Villages local directory of services and opportunities could raise awareness.

The Third Age Activities Fayre provided an opportunity to find out about available services, and several stallholders said they would attend another similar event. A link has been established with the Mill Café in Balerno who are keen to host a different organisation each week and provide a platform for promotion of the services available.

The Mill Café in Balerno has offered a space for charities and organisations to promote their service and recruit volunteers once a week. So far three organisations have signed up for this opportunity, and at the first session Community Connecting reported this was a useful activity and generated a high level of interest.

OUTPUTS: THE NUMBERS

Over 250 older members of the community participated in 25 separate group and one to one discussions about local services, and over 70 completed questionnaires giving an indication of loneliness.

SWVP has hosted:

- one Third Age Activities Fayre attended by 24 stallholders and around 100 members of the public, with entertainment provided by local choirs and pupils from Currie Primary School
- fourteen coffee afternoons in local cafes attended by 11 people each time on average
- three social meetings involving gentle exercise and activities such as a quiz, a reminiscence session and live music, attended by an average of 15 members each session
- one volunteer recruitment session attended by 8 organisations and 10 members of the public
- one public discussion on transport attended by around 100 members of the public
- one transport survey attracting over 250 responses

These events have been led by SWVP and supported by 5 local volunteers.

Some older people and families of older residents have contacted SWVP about social opportunities and befriending services. SWVP has been able to advise these individuals on appropriate services, including events hosted by SWVP and services provided by other organisations.

The SWVP Third Age Activities Fayre brought together 24 local, city-wide and national organisations held information stalls, and around 100 community members attended. 15 stallholders had been hoping to recruit volunteers at the event, and of these 6 said they came in to contact with potential volunteers, with an additional 3 stallholders claiming the event had partly enabled them to meet potential volunteers.

The Volunteer Fayre in August in Balerno was poorly attended by the public, however all of the 8 organisations in attendance did have some interest from potential volunteers and reported that the event had been useful for networking. Links were made with potential for future collaboration, including using the local Mill Café as a space for organisations to promote their service.

OUTCOMES: EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

Feedback from summer social events organised by SWVP has been very positive, as the following comments from attendees shows:

- “It’s good to have something to look forward to”
- “I’ve made new friends”
- “It’s good to get out, it gives a purpose to the day”
- “it's good to have this in the diary, it makes the week go faster”

Asked about why they come to the events, the commonest answer refers to the social benefit.

As a result of attending these summer socials, several individuals have learned about a social club they had not previously heard of and intend to join. Some people have visited local cafes they had not been to before and individuals have made new friends. In one case, a lady who lives alone in her privately owned house has met residents of sheltered housing and has been invited to look at the sheltered housing as she is thinking about downsizing. Another female resident has recently moved to the area and as a result of SWVP hosting a discussion group in her sheltered housing she has had the confidence to come to other social events.

The three local cafes used for coffee afternoons have been very helpful in providing deals for these meetings which makes payment fair and simple for attendees. They reserve tables to ensure space is available and state their desire to be welcoming and inclusive to older guests, and are very supportive of SWVP’s aims.

The leader of the Young at Heart group, which SWVP took over for the summer, was very pleased that a service is being provided. She said “the volunteers need a break over the summer, so it’s great that you can put this on. For some people it’s all the social interaction they get, and they love it.” Some older people attended the SWVP Young at Heart sessions and as a result joined Young at Heart when it restarted in September under the usual leaders. One lady said “I really enjoyed the sessions in the summer so I have started coming to Young at Heart every week”.

The SWVP Third Age Activities Fayre received positive feedback. One stallholder stated it was a “great opportunity to chat to the public, very useful to reach people in this area”. Several stallholder recruited potential volunteers, and interestingly one stallholder who had not recruited any volunteers mentioned “we didn’t get any interest in a volunteering capacity but that seems to reflect the amount of good community work that is already going on in that area as quite a lot of people we spoke to were already actively volunteering in some way”. As a result of this event, some social groups reported recruiting new members and Edinburgh Leisure gathered enough interest to run a taster session in Currie. Additionally, several stallholders reported benefitting from the opportunity to meet with other organisations – “[the event was] useful as a networking opportunity for stallholders too”. In addition this event served to raise awareness of the issue of loneliness and aided networking between community members, statutory services and voluntary service providers.

The SWVP recruitment fayre resulted in some community members registering interest in volunteering with various organisations, as well as useful links between organisations. The Mill Café in Balerno offered space to organisations wanting to promote their service to café customers and this has begun with Community Connecting, the Eric Liddell Centre Carer Befriending Programme and Currie Day Centre due to hold stalls.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

Since SWVP has begun acting on the themes emerging from discussion groups it is hoped that local older residents feel that their needs are being taken in to consideration and that their voices are being heard. By communicating residents' opinions with Councillors it is hoped that the needs and opinions of this age group will be taken in to account when any service provisions are being planned.

Through raising awareness of the issue of loneliness and social isolation throughout the wider community, it is hoped that communities will be better armed to provide informal support. By recruiting more volunteers to new and existing services it is believed that services will be strengthened and the support network for older people broadened.

By providing additional social activities where attendees can meet new people, it is hoped that friendships will develop and social networks will improve.

Offering GPs a method of social prescribing, in the form of the LOOPs Phonenumber and a direct point of contact through the LOOPs Community Navigator, ought to reduce reliance by some individuals on statutory services.

In an attempt to reach individuals who do not leave the house often but are not eligible for LOOPs Hospital Discharge teams, SWVP approached a Service Manager responsible for organising Home Care, resulting in referral forms for the LOOPs Community Navigator being disseminated to relevant patients by Community Nurses. This ought to result in increased awareness of the LOOPs service and uptake by potentially socially isolated older people.

By its presence at relevant network meetings and forums, SWVP is ensuring that the needs of the South West Villages are considered by other organisations and policy makers.

The Grey Horse Inn in Balerno, who opened up and made scones for SWVP coffee afternoons despite being closed in daytimes during the summer, were keen to continue offering the deal to older people on a monthly basis.

The Activities and Services Guide will provide a source of information for residents.

Creation of a SWVP Facebook page will enable organisations and residents to communicate, sharing information and recruiting volunteers.

REACH: HOW FAR INTO THE COMMUNITY DID YOU REACH?

SWVP has liaised with multiple voluntary sector organisations, statutory service providers, community groups and private companies involved in delivering services for older people, including:

- Edinburgh City Council
- Edinburgh Befrienders Forum
- Dementia Friendly Pentlands
- Community Councils from each of the three villages
- Service managers from dementia day care centres
- Managers from Sheltered Housing
- Headteachers from local primary and secondary schools
- Neighbourhood Watch Scotland
- Presidents of local social groups
- Volunteering Matters
- Contact the Elderly
- Cyrenians Golden Years
- Silverline
- Alzheimer's Scotland
- Independent Age

- Vintage Vibes
- Edinburgh Garden Partners
- Volunteer Centre
- RVS
- Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership
- Community Connecting
- Local libraries
- Private care at home providers
- Handicabs
- Fire and Rescue Service
- Care and Repair
- Changeworks
- Services provided by the Eric Liddell Centre
- Meal Makers
- LOOPs SW forum
- SW Voluntary Sector Forum

Service delivery partnerships have been created with:

- Community Connecting
- Local group Young at Heart
- Currie Primary School
- Transition Edinburgh Pentlands

Assistance with information dissemination has been provided by:

- City of Edinburgh Council
- Local Councillors
- Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership
- Community Councils
- Local Schools
- EVOC
- LOOPs
- Konect Magazine
- Currie and Balerno News
- Statutory care at home providers
- Private care at home providers
- Local libraries
- Pentland Neighbourhood Partnership
- Local shops and cafes
- Coordinators of local dementia day care centres
- Neighbourhood Watch Scotland
- Active individuals within the community
- Currie Kirk
- Balerno Parish Church
- Juniper Green Parish Church
- Balerno Village Screen
- Balerno Village Trust
- The Mill Café at St Joseph's Church
- Community Connecting
- Home Instead
- Currie East Neighbourhood Watch

LEARNING: LEARNING FOR THE FUTURE

The SWVP has discovered that the community in the South West Villages do indeed have a sense of cohesion. This is evident from discussions with residents, volunteers and group coordinators. For example, upon being asked what their favourite thing about living in Balerno is, residents of Sheltered Housing said “the community feel” and “sense of community”. It also seems to be a very open place. Residents who are new to the area said “everyone is so friendly” and “everyone has been really welcoming”. SWVP has been gratefully welcomed in to the community and invited to attend social groups, speak at meetings such as the Dementia Friendly Communities group and Community Council meetings, and join as a member of a sub-committee from Juniper Green Community Council with a focus on community resilience.

It seems however that this cohesion is underutilised. Several members of social clubs stated dissatisfaction at the clubs closing for the summer, but on the whole did not make arrangements to meet up independently of the club. The SWVP summer coffee afternoons highlight this and it is hoped that attendees will feel able to organise social meetings without the formal input of SWVP.

SWVP has learned that a lot of work is going on in the area around dementia, with several day care centres and a group who have received funding from the Life Changes Trust to employ a Development Worker.

It has been a surprise that a priority for residents has been transport, rather than available social opportunities. Community members generally feel that there are a lot of social activities on offer, but the topic of bus transport is high on the agenda.

It has been felt that informal discussion is better received by the older population than questionnaires. For this reason SWVP has conducted focus groups to gather opinion rather than mass surveying.

It may be more effective to dovetail with existing community events to promote volunteering and raise awareness, such as Balerno Farmers’ Market, Juniper Green Farmers’ Market, gala days, Balerno Music Festival, Pentlands Book Festival and Balerno Village Screen events.

CHALLENGES AND CHANGES

As experienced by other studies on loneliness and social isolation, SWVP has found measuring levels of loneliness to be difficult. Accessing the “hard-to-reach” individuals is, by definition, difficult. Additionally introducing SWVP as a project aiming to reduce loneliness appeared to have the effect of immediately losing some people’s attention, as they didn’t feel it applied to them. Responding to this SWVP described itself more positively as a project aimed at “strengthening resources for older people”. Individuals most at risk of isolation have been targeted through partnering with care providers, and Neighbourhood Watch Schemes, but these of course rely on individuals who are given information about SWVP identifying it as relevant to themselves and making the effort to contact SWVP.

SWVP appreciates that GPs are very busy and cannot be expected to know about all the social opportunities available in the community. As a short-term solution the LOOPs phonenumber has been provided to the Pentlands Medical Centre, however longer-term, more robust strategies need to be considered, such as Link Workers having a presence within the Medical Centre, or the implementation of a direct referral route to the Community Navigator.

Financial restraints have been problematic, for example the funding withdrawn from E&M Horsburgh and Waverley Travel bus routes. Despite continued discussion the local councils remain unable to put any more money towards transport in the South West villages, although they do explain the reasons behind this and offer advice on alternative routes to reach the destinations in question.

An attempt was made to work with a High School however the time of year meant students were busy with exams and therefore it was not an ideal time to get involved.

An attempt was made to gather interest for a forum which would inform all the groups involved in social activities for older people about what is going on in the area, however response to this suggestion was very poor, and those who did respond felt it would be not be beneficial.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Phase 2 of SWVP has been approved, and will be concerned with implementation of activities as advised by the findings from Phase 1.

It is proposed that a Community Wellbeing Officer is employed to work on the following outcomes:

- Increased number of older people engaging with SWVP, in discussions, attendance at events, as volunteers or as recipients of a service
- Increased number of local volunteers, of any age
- Volunteering is coordinated and supported
- Service providers and residents are engaged with in order to identify areas which could be strengthened, and to raise awareness of social isolation through the wider community
- New projects to meet needs are recommended and, where possible, implemented
- SWVP continues to support the community in their discussions needed to improve transport options
- Increased awareness of social isolation and involvement from young people eg. school pupils
- Improved integration and knowledge of third sector activities within statutory services
- Opportunities for cross-sector working are developed

Specific activities to achieve these outcomes include:

- Targeting of individuals most at risk of social isolation by maintaining existing links with Home Care providers, Library services, other organisations operating in the area and HSCP
- Develop existing relationships with schools to coordinate and support intergenerational projects
- Develop SWVP Facebook page with local volunteers and organisations for communicating and advertising local opportunities
- Gather feedback from communities on identified service needs
- Discuss and jointly plan “community gathering” event with key community representatives and service providers to ascertain community views
- Set up new initiatives to respond to identified community needs where relevant
- Carry out evaluation of the implemented services and the scope for their continuation, with SWVP or other organisations
- Consider the feasibility of developing a volunteer driver scheme and research potential community transport options in partnership with City of Edinburgh Council, West Lothian Council and Health and Social Care Partnership
- Identify third sector partners who might be able to expand service support in the area longer term eg. Eric Liddell Centre projects, Cyrenians, Meal Makers, Dementia Friendly Pentlands
- Use EVOC resources to identify possible service providers and overcome limitations they may have

- Promote the LOOPs Phonenumber to GPs such that GPs are able to advise patients on how LOOPs could help them
- Support the link between GPs and the LOOPs Community Navigator and Community Wellbeing Liaison Officer

ANYTHING ELSE?

Please use this area to include **any further information you would like to add to support your report.**

If you have video or audio information to include please send directly to chloe.wright@evoc.org.uk or by mail to EVOC, 14 Ashley Place, Edinburgh, EH6 5PX.