

SUBJECT:	<i>Handy Helpers/ Gardening Scheme</i>
REPORT OF:	<i>Cllr Paul Kelly / Cllr Liz Walsh</i>
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WARD/S AFFECTED	<i>All</i>

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 Both Age UK and Community Impact Bucks (CIB) operate volunteer led chargeable home assistance services or handy person schemes to help elderly, vulnerable and isolated residents with small tasks around the home or gardening schemes which they can't or daren't do for themselves.

1.2 These types of services provide a trust-worthy service which offers visits and help from DBS checked volunteers or professional trades persons to perform small tasks whilst also connecting persons in to their schemes offering befriending and social support to reduce social isolation.

1.3 This report outlines a proposal to establish a project in Chiltern and South Bucks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To advise the Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities on the establishment of a scheme to provide home assistance and gardening.**

2. Content of Report

2.1 Since the loss of the Mears Safer Homes Handy person scheme prior to 2013 there has been a recognised gap in the support for older vulnerable people seeking to undertake small jobs including; gardening, and repairs and maintenance.

Crime Prevention

2.2 Elderly, vulnerable and isolated residents are often challenged when faced with small tasks around the home which they can't or daren't do for themselves. This results in a property that may appear unkempt, overgrown and a trigger for opportunist criminals involved in doorstep crime.

2.3 Evidence from Trading Standards states that unkempt gardens (particularly those with large and unruly or very high hedges) and visible minor repairs such as loose tiles act as a lure to doorstep criminals, especially if there are other indicators of potential vulnerability such as a key safe or grab rail. In Chiltern and South Bucks Districts a number of very high value

doorstep crimes (those in excess of £100k), where elderly residents were targeted and 'groomed', evolved from an initial small gardening or repair job.

2.4 Unfortunately because of the nature of the crime and the vulnerabilities of the victims, factors such as fear, intimidation, shame, isolation and of course cognitive impairment such as dementia mean that levels of reporting of this type of crime are very low. National and local data indicates that only around one in ten incidents is ever reported to either the police or Trading Standards.

2.5 Statistics gathered nationally from the Chartered Institute of Trading Standards (CTSI) indicates that 28 per cent of reported doorstep crime victims in 2015 had a 'neglected garden', and 43 per cent had a 'grab rail, key safe or ramp' outside their home. There is no breakdown for Chiltern and South Bucks, but Trading Standards Officer Chris Holden states that around 1 in 4 of the 61 incidents of doorstep crime reported to Trading Standards in the 2 years end March 2017 had a garden element to them. It is estimated that 145 or so incidents went unreported across both Districts.

2.6 A handyperson scheme targeted at those who are least able is considered by Foundations the professional body for home improvement agencies as a key agency to reduce the risks to older persons.

Falls Prevention

2.7 Those over 65 years of age are most at risk, suffering both the highest mortality rate and the most severe injuries. In 2009 in England and Wales alone, people aged 65 or over accounted for 7,475 deaths as a result of an accident of which 49% were due to a fall. More dated figures relating to A&E attendances after home accidents show that falls are by far the single largest cause of attendance. In 2002, 2.7million people attended an A&E department in the UK following a home accident, of whom 1.2million had suffered a fall. Over-65s accounted for 19 per cent of the total number of A&E home accident attendances, but 30 per cent of the attendances were due to accidental falls at home. The majority of accidents in the older age groups also involve females rather than males.

2.8 Many of the fatal and non-fatal accidents to older people are attributable wholly or in part to frailty and failing health. This can lead to failure or slowness to see and avoid risks. By drawing the attention of older people and their carers to danger spots and unsafe habits then accidents can be reduced

2.9 Once a fall requiring hospitalisation has occurred social care often assess the risks and put in place a care plan. Apart from when Bucks Fire and Rescue undertake the fitting of fire alarms there is no longer the infrastructure to provide a home safety check and refer risks to other agencies.

2.10 A home assistance service could assist with the administration and support required for a revised home safety check as well as supporting the removal of risks and hazards around the home.

2.11 Housing Standards Officers from the four District Councils are currently reviewing the support offered through the Disabled Facilities Grants programme funded from the Better Care Fund. This review will seek to offer the same assistance and range of grants across

each district, preventing the current post code lottery of eligibility for adaptations and support. As part of this work the authorities are also considering how home support can be offered incorporating a handy person scheme.

2.12 Further work is required to enable a scheme to be developed and funded however both Age UK and Community Impact Bucks (CIB) are piloting or delivering handyperson schemes in parts of the County. Appendix 1 is an example of how a CIB scheme is being piloted.

3. Consultation

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards, Community Impact Bucks, Age UK

4. Corporate Implications

Reports must include specific comments addressing the following implications;

4.1 Financial – the review of disability grants will consider how the service delivery could be supported through the use of the Better Care Fund, Service User payments, and voluntary contributions. The potential cost to the Better Care Fund is approximately £25k/annum

4.2 Legal – if developed the project would involve a countywide approach to the use of the Better Care Fund and be approved through the Health and Wellbeing Board

5. Links to Council Policy Objectives

Working towards safe and healthier local communities

6. Next Step

To finalise the review of disability adaptations funded through the Better Care Fund to consider whether the District Council's should support such an initiative.

Background Papers:	It is a legal requirement that we make available any background papers relied on to prepare the report and should be listed at the end of the report (copies of Part 1 background papers for executive decisions must be provided to Democratic Services)
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