



# VILLAGE AGENTS

*Providing older people in Gloucestershire's rural communities with easier access to services and information*

## PROGRESS REPORT

**QUARTER 3 Year 2  
January to March 2008**

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## **VILLAGE AGENTS**

Providing older people in Gloucestershire's rural communities with easier access to services and information

### **QUARTER 3 Year 2 2008 (January to March)**

#### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Section</b>		<b>Page</b>
<b>1.0</b>	January to March 2008	1
<b>2.0</b>	Monitoring & Latest Statistics	2
<b>3.0</b>	Case Study	4

## 1.0 VILLAGE AGENTS JANUARY TO MARCH 2008

### 'MEET THE DRAGONS'

Meet the Dragons was an initiative devised by The Learning Set – a group of Social Care leaders, to highlight innovation in social care. Village Agents successfully won through to the final five projects which all went forward into the 'Dragons Den'. The final five and were all successful in achieving funding and consultancy support to take their ideas further. Village Agents were presented with their award of £10,000 in funding and £40,000 worth of support from 'What If!', the Innovation Foundation. David Behan, the Director General of Social Care, who gave out the award was very complimentary about the project and said it was the kind of service he would like to see rolled out across the whole country.

### FOCUS GROUPS AND EVALUATION

Village Agents began the final phase of the evaluation required for the Department for Work and Pensions in January and this will continue until the end of March and into the months of April and May. Focus groups are being held around the county with members of the public, mainly featuring those who have used the services of their Village Agent. Topics covered include their feeling of safety in their immediate environments, their security when out and about in their communities, quality of life and how they feel about the services that are available to them.



Following on from this each Village Agent is required to complete 30 specially designed questionnaires with older members of the parishes in which they work; these results will then be compared with the results of the first phase of the evaluation in 2006/2007. Final results should be available by December 2008 and are being pulled together by the University of Birmingham.

### COMMUNITY AGENTS

Community Agents are following in the footsteps of Village Agents in order to facilitate access to services for the over 50s, provide high quality information and test the limit of holistic working by joining up services. Community Agents have funding for 6 months from January to June 2008. The role of the Community Agent is to become a trusted member of the community, so that people will approach them and recommend the service.

6 Community Agents have been appointed:

- 1 County Agent for Chinese community
- 1 Gujarati speaking Agent for the county and Cheltenham
- 1 Bengali speaking for Cheltenham and the county
- 1 for the Polish community
- 1 African Caribbean for Cheltenham, Tewkesbury and The Forest of Dean
- 1 African Caribbean for Gloucester City, Stroud District and Cotswold District

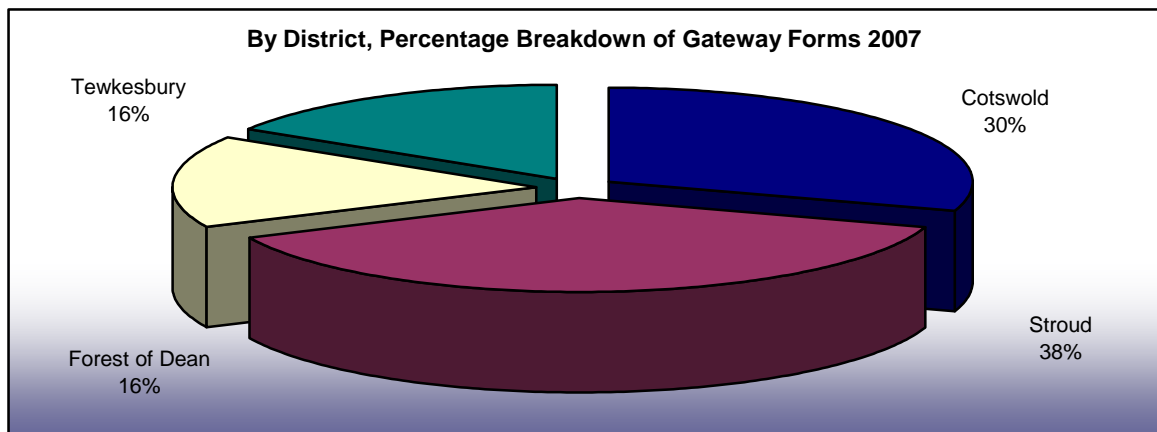
One example of how a Community Agent is working is shown below:

e.g. "a gentleman who is living in his hallway as this is the only 'room' that is heated. No inside toilet! They are very enthusiastic about starting community groups to encourage social activities and we are sourcing funding from different areas for this e.g. In Touch, Adult Education....."

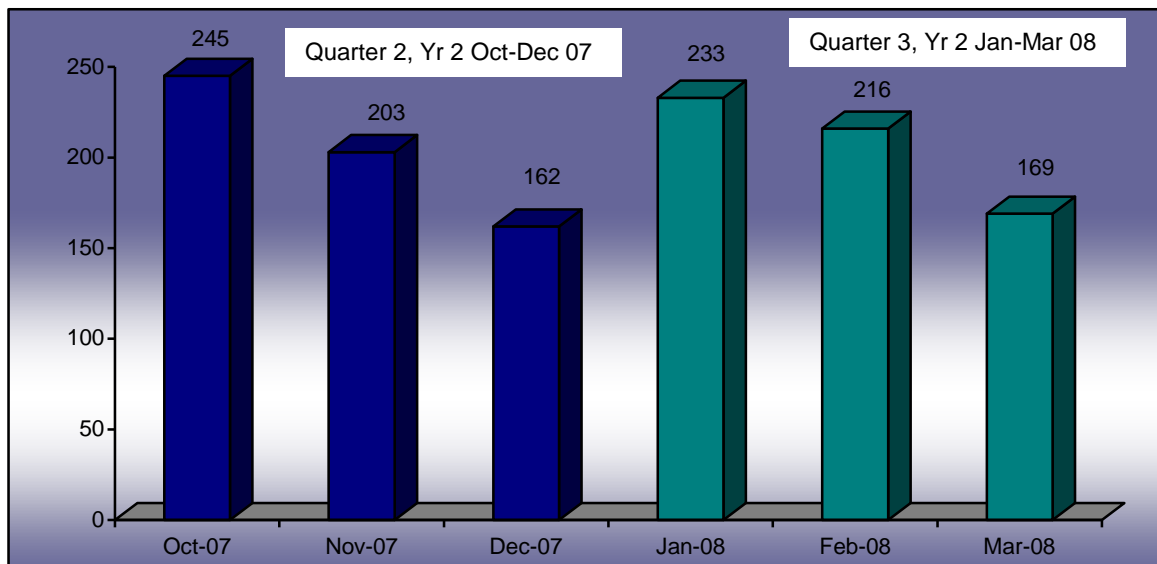
## 2.0 MONITORING

After each visit a Village Agent makes, they are required to fill in a referral, 'gateway' form. The form collects demographic data, the nature of the problem and other information relevant to any follow up visit. The gateway form is then emailed to the required agency by the Village Agent for the query to be addressed.

- Village Agents have now submitted **2,731** gateways since December 2006. For the whole year 2007 the total was **2,086**. Stroud District submitted the most gateway forms over this period (38%). Please see the chart below for the district breakdown

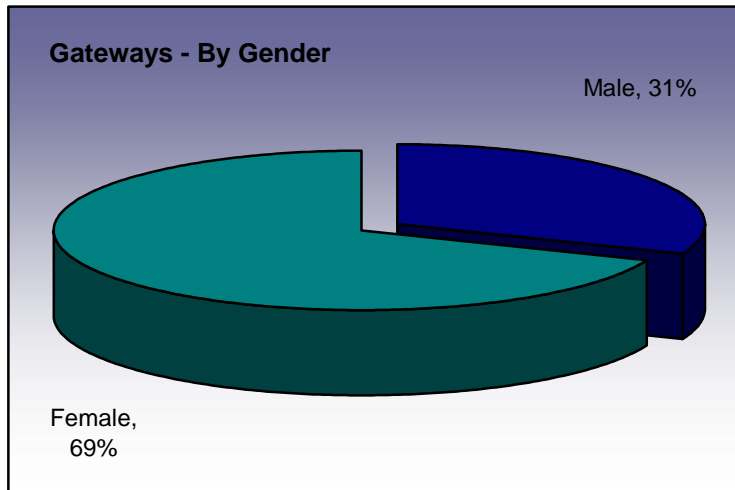


- A total of 618 referrals were made by Village Agents in quarter 3, year 2 (January to March 2008), slightly more than in quarter 2, year 2 (October to Dec). The monthly breakdown is shown below. *Please note that March figures may be subject to change as gateways may be submitted in retrospect*



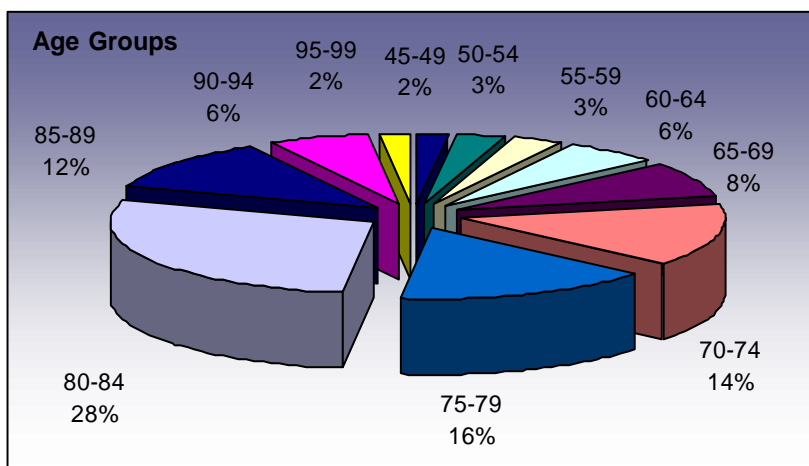
The chart shows a decrease in referrals in both December and March, these decreases are in part due to Christmas and Easter falling in these months. January 2008 showed one of the highest gateway totals since the beginning of the project with 233 gateway forms submitted. January 2008 follows October 2007 (245 gateways) and August 2007 (242) as the busiest months.

Through the gateway form Village Agents are able to collect demographic data relating to their clients, this has been collated for **2007** and is shown in the charts below. Please note that some of the clients will be repeat clients so there is an element of double counting, this however should not dramatically affect the results proportionately.

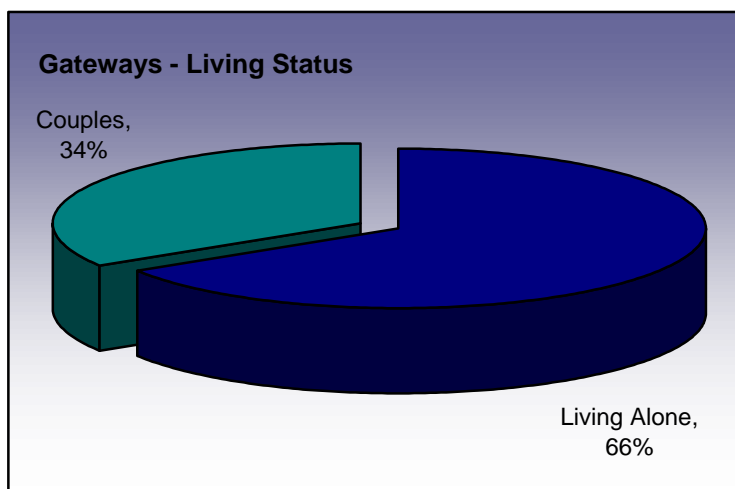


The majority (69%) of clients seen by Village Agents are female

This in context is in part to be expected as over half (approximately 55%) of Gloucestershire's over 50 population are female. (ONS statistics)



The largest numbers of gateway forms have been completed for the 75-84 age group (44%) with the largest proportion of these being aged 80-84 (28%).



Two thirds (66%) of clients seen by Village Agents live alone

### 3.0 Village Agent Case Study:

Below is an example of some of the fantastic work that Village Agents do on a regular basis (adapted for anonymity).

“I have worked with several members of a thriving social club, covering a wide variety of cases, over the past 12 months. The members enjoy various activities and entertainments and good home-cooked food, with the option of taking an extra portion home for the next day.

This is a selection of cases I have dealt with from the social club in one of my parishes. I was chatting to a new member last week, who is full-time carer for his wife. The group organiser had given me a nod that they may be in need of some help. Sure enough, I received a call from the husband that evening, and am going to see them at home next week. I understand that he has several issues to discuss. After 12 months in the job, nothing I get asked about surprises me. I enjoy the challenge of finding answers, and certainly get a buzz from being ‘hands on’ and seeing the results.

- Mrs H. – I took Mrs H along with me the first time I visited the group, as she had become increasingly depressed during the winter months, having been virtually housebound. Since her first visit, she has been a regular member of this and another group, and this social inclusion has been of enormous benefit to her. Along the way, another Village Agent and I have enabled her to claim extra benefits and Pension Credits, had Occupational Therapy Assessments resulting in Living Aids and Safety Grab Rails, helped her fill in forms and sort out paperwork, got Smoke Alarms and Sensor Lights fitted, had a water meter installed to save money, and got her nebuliser repaired as a matter of urgency.

- Mrs M – Mrs M is in her mid 90's, and when I first met her she asked if I could find her some information about a bath lift device. Although she could still manage to bathe, she was extremely concerned about the dangers of slipping and having an accident. I checked the device out on the internet, and spoke to Mrs M about the cost, which was a lot more than she had expected or could afford. I then suggested that I refer her for an OT assessment to see if she would be



eligible to have her bath replaced with a shower. This took place, and Mrs V was promised that a walk-in shower would be installed. After a few months, nothing further had happened, so I contacted the housing association who promised to send someone out to do a survey. This was done, and Mrs M was told the work would go ahead.

Time passed and still nothing happened. I made further enquiries, and it appeared that an outside agency had been called in by Severn Vale to clear a backlog of cases, and this company had since ceased to exist. I enlisted the help of the Adult Helpdesk, which led to a meeting at Mrs M's house with a gentleman from the OT team, who confirmed that the award had been made and promised to follow up the progress of the case with the relevant people. Mrs M is now delighted with her shower. I have also persuaded her to have a helpline, in view of the fact she worries about falling. She recently posed me another question – she has a hedge at the bottom of her garden which is getting out of control. She needed it cutting back to a

reasonable height, partly because it was blocking her neighbour's view. I scratched my head a bit on this one, because I knew she wouldn't be able to afford a professional to come and do it. I tried Anchor Staying Put but they weren't able to help, and then I happened to catch sight of an article in the Citizen about a Community Volunteer Group in Brockworth who had just purchased a hedge cutter to help them tidy up older people's gardens. A phone call to the group resulted in a contact for Action 4 Employment, who were only too happy to go and trim Mrs M's hedge, and remove the cuttings, for no charge. On my last visit to the club, Mrs M asked me about being able to use a laptop (she is writing a book!) and I am awaiting further information from the Age Concern MITS service.

- Mr and Mrs A – They had been given a computer and wanted to keep in touch with their grown-up children and their families, so I did some research on Broadband packages for them
- Mrs P – Another member of the club but living in a neighbouring village. Told me that while she was able to get to the Doctor's, as the bus would drop her off by the surgery, this wasn't a designated bus stop, so she was unable to catch the bus home as she couldn't walk to the official stop. I was able to put her in touch with a volunteer driver who is quite willing to take her to appointments.

- Mrs S – When I first met Mrs S, her husband had just gone into residential care, consequently, the domestic help she had from Social Services had ceased, but she wasn't able to manage on her own. She needed help to do a bit of ironing and a spot of assisted shopping. I managed to find someone through Age Concern Clean Sweep Plus. This arrangement is working very well. Before Christmas, I took Mrs S's electric blanket to Age Concern for safety checking. It



failed the test, and was replaced with a new one, which she was extremely pleased with. Following the death of her husband, she has recently been clearing out his clothes, but can't manage to get them to a Charity Shop on her own. I know of a local school that are collecting bags of clothes which will help them raise funds, and I have promised Mrs S that I will collect her bags and take them

to the collection point. Mrs S is also a regular passenger on my Minibus Minitrips, which she particularly enjoys as she is unable to get out and about on her own.

- Mr and Mrs T – This couple had a private arrangement for domestic help which had come to an end, and wanted to employ another cleaner but were wary about having an unknown person in their home. Following the successful arrangement with Age Concern for Mrs S, I also put them in touch with Age Concern, and they were very happy to use someone recommended by this organisation.
- Mrs E – I met Mrs E for the first time recently. She was desperately worried about her husband who is in constant pain following a series of treatments and operations, and she didn't know what course of action to take. I did some research and phoned Mrs E with details of the pain clinic at the hospital, but I emphasised that the referral must be made through their GP. I received a phone call later, thanking me for my concern, she had taken her husband to the GP, and they had an appointment for the clinic the following week.

- Miss C – This is a difficult case which is ongoing, and which I am working on with Warm and Well. Miss C lives in a housing association bungalow, and hasn't had any heating, other than an electric fire, since her Parkray system broke down more than a year ago. She only recently asked me for advice. There seems to have been a difference of opinion with the housing association during the past twelve month period, when she was told that her existing system had to be replaced, and an engineer promised an oil fired system, then the contractors didn't turn up, then the housing association said they no longer fitted oil systems, and the engineer had only been on a temporary contract. They proceeded to offer Miss C an economy 10 'Wet' system, which she doesn't want, and so they have come to an impasse, resulting in 80+ year old Miss C living in unacceptably cold conditions. The Warm and Well adviser is now acting as go-between – currently there seems to be a possibility that the HA will consider oil, otherwise a compromise will have to be reached, perhaps with Miss C accepting an economy 7 'dry' system as being the quickest and easiest to install.”