



VILLAGE AGENTS

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

PROGRESS REPORT

**QUARTER 1 Year 2
July to September**

GRCC
Community House, 15 College Green
Gloucester
GL1 2LZ

01452 528491

VILLAGE AGENTS

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

QUARTER 1 Year 2 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section		Page
1.0	July to September 2007	1
2.0	Monitoring & Latest Statistics	6

1.0 JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2007

July saw the official end of the first year of the Village Agents project although in reality Cotswold and Stroud Agents have until the end of October before they have been in post for a year and Tewkesbury and the Forest of Dean until December. An incredible amount has been achieved by all Village Agents over the past 9-12 months and this has continued into the first quarter of the second year.

Gloucestershire Floods July 2007

July witnessed the worst flooding to hit Gloucestershire in living memory with many communities in Tewkesbury and the Cotswold districts completely cut off from the outside world. After the initial rain had stopped thousands of homes were left without running water for almost two weeks and many initially without power. After the flood water finally receded, the total scale of the damage could be assessed.

Below and overleaf are a few examples of how the Village Agents rallied round to help their communities in need, this not only happened with the initial floods but also in the aftermath.

This list is by no means exhaustive but details the most common areas of assistance.

- Making sure older people have water and are heeding the advice of the authorities with regards to personal health
- Finding out about the locations of bowsers and laundrettes in the locality
- Assisting communities in arranging for bowsers to be delivered and replenished
- Phoning round to key contacts in the villages giving out the county council emergency helpline number
- Delivering milk and bread and other staple goods
- Over the weekend some have been getting involved in working parties to distribute water and this is continuing
- Offering help to other parts of the county, those with 4 x 4's and plenty of water are willing to go where necessary
- General ringing round to their existing clients to make sure that everything is okay on a daily basis

There was also a great deal of feedback from agencies and local authorities on the important role the Village Agents had played throughout the crisis, one in particular is shown below:

'I would like to record my personal appreciation for the work that Mike did in the communities of Coberley, Cowley and surrounding areas following the flooding and especially the loss of the Severn Trent water supply to Parishes on the western edge of the District. He kept in touch with us, gave us updates regularly and more importantly, ferried copious supplies of bottled water from distribution centres in Cheltenham to the most needy in his area of action. We had a real struggle ensuring that bowsers were despatched to those places but Mike filled the breach at a critical time and with calmness and good humour too. What an asset he is to your team!'

Les Haines Cotswold District Council

A VERY WET WEEK IN THE LIFE OF A VILLAGE AGENT – JANE GRIFFITHS TEWKESBURY BOROUGH

My diary for the week read:

Monday	7.30pm	Maisemore Parish Council Meeting
Tuesday	1.30pm	Village Agent meeting Gloucester
Tuesday	6.00pm	Police Neighbourhood Co-ordination meeting,
Wednesday	6.00pm	Police Neighbourhood Co-ordination meeting,
Thursday	2.00pm	Maisemore Friendship Group 10 th Anniversary Celebrations

As you can imagine, the reality was rather different!

Monday: Checked around my parishes by phone to see where I could be of most practical help, and how everyone was coping. Two of my parishes, Sandhurst and Chaceley, were severely affected by the flooding, and while I offered support, they were beyond anything I could do at that time. I imagine my services will be more in demand at a later date, when the immediate situation has been alleviated, and residents will be looking for answers to questions about insurance, housing, grants, council services etc. Ashleworth, Maisemore and Hasfield were relatively unscathed, all retaining their water supply throughout the crisis. Tirley, on the other hand, lost their supply, and were pretty well cut off from civilisation. I spoke to some of my contacts in Tirley, and promised practical help to get water to the elderly as soon as the first delivery arrived.



Tuesday: Ascertained likely time of first water delivery, so drove to Tirley, calling in at one of my clients on the way to drop off some basic necessities. Arrived at the Village Hall where a group of villagers were awaiting the arrival of the water delivery. As soon as it arrived, we all formed a human chain, and soon got it stacked up in the Village Hall. I even roped in two of my sons to help. Once the water was safely stored, I made a list of the elderly and others who would have difficulty getting their own supplies, loaded up my car and set off on my 'water round'. I know the circumstances were far from ideal, but I made a lot of new contacts and gained useful knowledge of where people were particularly in need, for future reference.

Wednesday: I received a call that a local hotel landlady, who still had a water supply, was keeping rooms open for people to go and shower. I relayed this information to some of my contacts in Tirley, produced some posters to display the information, and also some flyers with this information and the offer of help with shopping for necessities during the crisis.

Thursday: Another day, another delivery of water (two tons of the stuff) to unload and deliver, along with my leaflets and some bread which I had been to the local bakery to collect first thing. Picked up a shopping order to deliver later. A dreadful day, weatherwise, so was very grateful for a cup of tea back at the Village Hall. I was rather concerned about one elderly gentleman that I called on, as he hadn't been getting his meals on wheels this week. His neighbour promised to keep an eye on him, and I made a mental note to check up on him at the beginning of the next week. Managed to fit in a home visit to discuss tax credits during the day, but otherwise, normal business suspended for the moment.

Friday: Back at my other job, but clutching my GRCC phone, as I have been asked to take part in a feature on how Village Agents are helping during this emergency, with Mike George on Radio Glos, along with Barbara Piranty. This takes place at 2.30pm. I am a bit nervous, but it seems to go very well, and later that afternoon, I receive a call from Barbara, who has been contacted by a lady who heard the interview and is dreadfully worried about her friends in Tirley who are flooded out, but refused to leave their home. I manage to track down some information about them and find out that they are ok, but unfortunately, the lady gave Barbara an incorrect phone number, so despite our best efforts, we were unable to pass this on. Also following on from the radio feature, I get a phone call from a lady in Maisemore who is very keen to help out in some way. I take her contact details and promise to get back in touch when I know what further help is needed.

So we get to the end of a very strange week. This is obviously an ongoing situation which will continue to affect people for some considerable time. The water has returned to the taps, although not suitable for drinking. I am returning to Tirley next week to check on the situation, and will re-visit all the people I called on, checking that everything is fine, and also offering to take their empty plastic water bottles to be recycled.

EXPERIENCE OF SALLYANNE BATCHELOR FOREST OF DEAN

I received a call from Social Services to see if I could help with quite a big problem. They were moving three very elderly ladies (2 of whom are diabetic and the other has a leg which requires dressing) who were evacuated from the floods in Tewkesbury and who have been staying at the Dilke Hospital until accommodation could be found. The re-housing of the ladies to a property in Newent was to take place the next day but there was a problem with the supply of meals. In Tewkesbury the ladies had meals on wheels every day – Newent could only offer meals on wheels on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Sheppard House had been approached but they would charge £5 per lady, per day and that was unacceptable to them, they do not operate at weekends but they agreed to deliver meals (if I could arrange them) for £2 per day.

I then contacted a local residential home and managed to arrange for them to cook three extra meals a day – dial a ride would then collect them and deliver them to the three ladies (except weekends of course – but the proprietor of the home offered to deliver them at weekends for me). All seemed sorted but at about 6pm ish everything had gone 'pear-shaped' because the meals have to be put in a special plate to keep them at a safe temperature – and the residential home don't have any. I have called Eileen Latham (Village Agent) and asked her to call Meals on Wheels first thing in the morning and ask them if we could borrow three special food containers for the residential home to use. If it's a YES, Eileen will contact Social Services and all will be sorted – if it is a NO Eileen will call me and I will hope that I can find three special plates to bring back with me and deliver to the residential home.

There was also a problem registering the ladies as temporary residents with the Dr Surgery – I spoke to the surgery registrations manageress and explained the situation to her – she agreed to register the lady with the leg problem straight away and we agreed that the other 2 diabetic ladies could be registered 3 days before their insulin runs out.

EXPERIENCE OF PAM THORNE STROUD DISTRICT

I have felt really useful to my villages for the last two weeks! It was gratifying that the chair of the parish council and the nurse for the elderly at Rowcroft both thought to contact me at the very beginning, one to ask for names of vulnerable people and one to provide them, and elderly people phoned me for news and advice.

I've also liaised with Stroud District Council, the police (Reuben Wyatt brought supplies for pensioners up to the villages) and neighbourhood watch in our effort to deliver water to households where people find it difficult or impossible to fetch their own, so I think the whole thing has helped to consolidate the position of Village Agents as people who look after the interests of the elderly in times of need.

The people concerned have been really appreciative (and still are - I'm still delivering drinking water to several households in Randwick, Rick Pellet from Neighbourhood Watch liaison is looking after Whiteshill).

Other Village Agent News and Happenings

- On 9th July a presentation was made to a panel of judges for the finals of National Customer Service Awards in Berkshire. Village Agents were one of four finalists in the Customer Service Team of the Year – Public Services and Education, up against Bolton County Council, Islington Council and Merseyside Police, highly commended in our category was UCAS. Two Village Agents (George Hill and Sallyanne Batchelor) accompanied Barbara Piranty (GRCC) to the presentation, and excellent feedback was given about the project, the Village Agent DVD and the Village Agents themselves. On 18th September at the Grosvenor House Hotel in London 6 Village Agents and the management team from GRCC and Gloucestershire County Council enjoyed a glittering ceremony, despite a valiant effort Village Agents were unsuccessful this year (Winners Merseyside Police) but after only 9 operational months were thrilled to have come so far in such a short space of time.



- During Quarter 1 monthly meetings continued with the Village Agents meeting at Community House with the other agents from their districts to discuss ideas and receive ongoing training. Trainers for August and September included:
Barnwood House Trust
Help the Aged
Carers Gloucestershire
Citizens Advice
Trainers confirmed for the coming months include Care and Repair Forest of Dean, Citizen's Advice, the Alzheimer's Society, and refresher training from Fire and Rescue, Warm and Well, the Pensions Service amongst others
- All 30 agents attended a training and networking day at Highnam Community Hall at the beginning of September; these meetings have proved to be extremely successful with agents from the different districts able to swap experiences and ideas.
- After the successful meeting held with David Drew MP with the Stroud Village Agents in June, Geoffrey Clifton Brown MP (Cotswolds) and Lawrence Robertson MP (Tewkesbury) met with the Village Agents from their relevant districts at Community House to discuss future working and issues. Mark Harper MP for the Forest of Dean is due to meet agents from his district early in October.
- In August a number of new Village Agents were recruited to replace those who had left the scheme. The areas to have new Village Agents are:

Ham, Stone and Alkington	Janet Taylor	07776245712
Kingswood, Hillersley and Tresham	Helen Daggart	07810630134
Hewelsfield and Brockweir, Tiddenham	Michael Russell	07810630190
Kingscote, Boxwell & Leighterton, Didmarton		
Westonbirt with Lasborough, Avening, Shipton	Carolynn Dent	07810630156

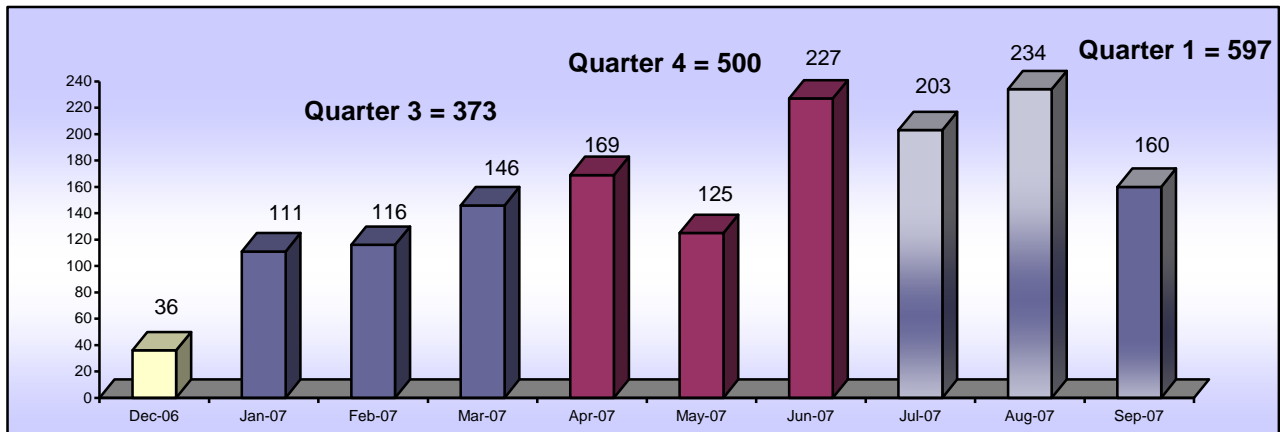
A brand new cluster has also been added in Tewkesbury Borough, this incorporates the parishes of Highnam and Minsterworth and the Village Agent is Jo Bennett: Telephone 07810630234

2.0 MONITORING

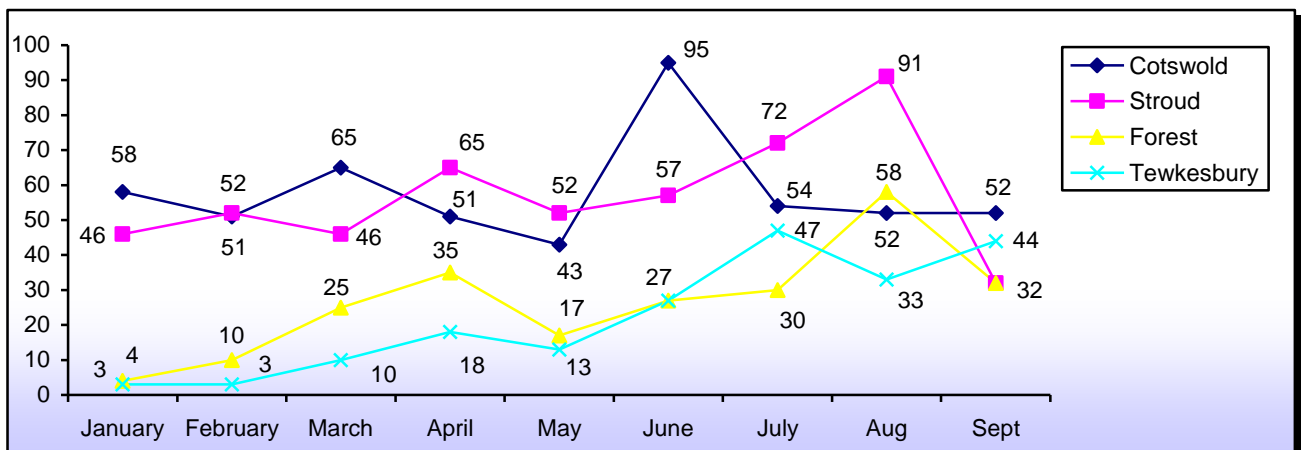
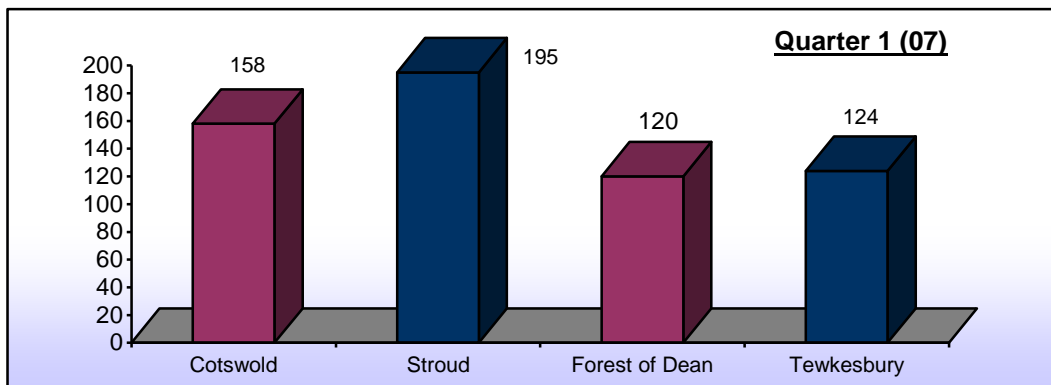
After each visit a Village Agent makes, they are required to fill in a referral, 'gateway' form. The form collects demographic data, the nature of the problem and other information relevant to any follow up visit. The gateway form is then emailed to the required agency by the Village Agent for the query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

- A total of 597 referrals were made by Village Agents in quarter 1, an increase of 97 when compared with quarter 4 and 224 when compared with quarter 3.

Total number of referrals by month – September 2007



Number of referrals by District



Please note that these figures are subject to change as referrals/gateways are sometimes submitted in retrospect

Between the period January to August Village Agents made contact with 12,827 people including members of the communities, service providers, existing groups (luncheon clubs, WI's, church groups, parish councils).

Village Agents have also dealt with a variety of issues as are shown in the chart below and overleaf. The most common issues are pensions and benefit advice, transport, fire and home safety, OT referrals and general support.

** Home improvement – gardening, home security, lifeline, minor adaptations, installation of grab rails*

Type of Contact	up to Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Total
Adult Placement scheme			1			1				2
Age Concern service			5	3	6	6	5	5	5	35
Bereavement					2	2	1	1	3	9
Blue Badge					3	3	6	4	3	19
Bus Pass								3		3
British Legion			1	1	5	6	3	4	1	21
CAB - Financial	2		1	1	3	1		2	1	11
Carers	2		2	1	4	4	1	2	4	20
Community building			2	2	5	4	2			15
Community Nursing							1	3	1	5
Community Warden			2		1			1		4
Council		5	3	10	3	3	5	7	1	37
Direct payments	1	1					1			3
Domestic Violence			1			1				2
Domestic help			1							1
DWP - Pensions/Pension credit	2	3	2	1	2	3	1	1		15
DWP - assessment	1	4	11	17	8	13	19	17	12	102
Employment				1		1		1		3
Energy - home heating/insulation		6	3	9	14	8	5	7	3	55
Energy - fuel bills	2	2	3		2	1	2	1	3	16
Electric Blankets									8	8
Financial	2	2	7	2	6	3	1			23
Flooding Support								13	33	46
Fire and safety - smoke alarms	6	1	11	14	17	11	10	10	3	83
Funding/grants	4	1	1		2	1				9
GOPA Advocate						1				1
GUiDE				1		3	2	1		7
GRCC - community Halls	2		1	7	4		3	1		18
GRCC - other				5					1	6
Health - general			2		3	5	6	2	6	24
Health - chiropody			1		1	1		1	1	5
Health - dentists		2					3	1	3	9
Health - falls	1		1				1			3
Health - medication		2	1	1	2		1	1		8
Health - appointments		3	3	3			5			14
Healthy lifestyle	1	2	3	15		2	2			25
Helpdesk - non referral support	1		5	6	2	4	1	3	4	26
Helpdesk - meals		1	1		1	1	1	4	3	12
Helpdesk - OT		5	11	17	7	13	11	18	6	88
Helpdesk - social care referral			8		1	1	1		1	12
HIA - gardening	1	7	5	3	2	1				19
HIA - home security	3	1	1				1		1	7
HIA - Lifeline	1									1

HIA - major work	2	1	1	3	1	1	2		2	13
HIA - minor work		2	7	9	8	5	14	11	5	61
HIA - Information							2	6	1	9
HIA - minor adaptations	1	2					4			7
Home Safety Check	1		1		2	2	3	1	1	11
Housing - planning	1							3		4
Housing Association - support/repairs	1	1		3	1	3	1	1		11
Housing benefit			2	1	2	3				8
Housing - general support	1	5	4	2	2	3	5	4	1	27
Housing - private rented support		1	1							2
IT training/assistance					3	5	3	1	1	13
Libraries - clubs	1		1		2		3			7
Libraries - Services							5	4	3	12
Libraries - sight impaired help	2		1			2	3	1	1	10
Lifeline				5	5	5	4	4	2	25
Lifelong learning	1	2	1	1			2			7
Mental Health	1	1								2
Message in a bottle	1		3	1	7	11	5	4	28	60
Other	1		1		1		12	7	11	33
People for You (Cotswold)						1				1
Police - cold callers	1									1
Police - Community policing		1	1				4	4		10
Police - domestic violence		1								1
Police - home security	3		1	2	4	5	7	2	1	25
Police - victim support		1								1
Sensory impairment	1	1	2	2	3	3	1			13
Social activities		1	3	7	10	3	10	2	7	43
Support - family/neighbour concerns		1	1		1			1		4
Support - general	5	32	25	26	32	29	40	32	28	249
Transport	9	18	7	6	15	10	32	22	17	136
Village Agent Awards									1	
Volunteering	2	1	1	6	5	4	10	2	3	34
Wills			1			1				2
	67	120	165	194	210	200	273	226	220	1674

The Gloucestershire County Council Adult Help Desk

The Gloucestershire County Council Adult Help Desk based at Shire Hall has been used as a source of advice and referrals by the Village Agents in their first few months of employment and will continue to be a vital point of contact throughout the life of the scheme.

Calls made by village agents are logged and the nature of the enquiry noted. Village agents may ring the help desk in reference to a particular issue or simply for background information.

The Adult Help Desk number is printed on publicity materials distributed by Village Agents in the event that a member of the public cannot contact a Village Agent or they do not feel comfortable calling a mobile phone number. In this eventuality the Customer Service Officer will pass on the query to the relevant Village Agent in order that a home visit can be arranged.