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# Village Agents

## Quarter 2 Year 4

### October to December 2009

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Providing older  
people with easier  
access to services  
and information

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Report produced by  
Gloucestershire Rural  
Community Council

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## A Christmas Village Agent Report 2009



Mr and Mrs Christmas were having a tough year. Mr Christmas did a bit of seasonal work, but their pension didn't stretch as far as it used to, and they really needed some advice on benefits. When the local Post Office was closed down, it affected his business because Mr Christmas had a lot of parcels to post and he didn't have suitable transport to get him to the nearest town, where parking was difficult anyway because he couldn't walk very far, what with his mobility problems and at his age. He really should have applied for a Blue Badge, or perhaps have called the Tewkesbury Volunteer Transport Service to help him. The trouble was, Mr and Mrs Christmas didn't know where to get this information and support from. They sat in their cold and draughty house, with the wind whistling straight from the North Pole (which wasn't very far in their case), worrying about paying the heating bills, not realising that advice on heating and insulation was readily available. They tried to stay warm by the fire, but Mr Christmas sat so close he was in danger of burning his beard. They really should get some Smoke Alarms installed.

On top of all this, Mrs Christmas was due to go into hospital and was worrying about how Mr Christmas would manage to cook for himself. She didn't realise that ready prepared meals could be delivered to the house. She was also very concerned about how she would be able to manage around the home when she came out of hospital. No-one had told her about having handrails and ramps fitted, or about other aids and equipment which could help. It was all becoming too much for her, and it didn't help that they lived in such an isolated area. She felt she had no-one to turn to. They had no near neighbours, and the family had moved away to find work a long time ago.

Luckily, like all the best Christmas stories, this one has a happy ending. Mr Christmas' sister, Mary Christmas, telephoned to find out if Mr Christmas would be visiting them on the same day as last year (and many years previously – Mr Christmas didn't like changes to his routine). When she heard about all their troubles, she knew straight away the very person who could help them. It was, of course, their Village Agent. One phone call later, their Village Agent had arranged to call round and have a chat over a cup of tea. Before long, their problems were well on the way to being sorted, and they found that they were really looking forward to their Christmas Holiday this year. In fact, they even thought they might book a short break away over the Festive period – just for a change...

### **Jane Griffiths,**

Village Agent for Ashleworth, Chaceley, Deerhurst, Forthampton, Hasfield, Maisemore, Sandhurst, Tirley, and Twyning.

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## GLOUCESTERSHIRE VILLAGE AGENTS - BACKGROUND

In June 2008 Gloucestershire Village Agents were mainstreamed as a service, with funding from Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust and Gloucestershire County Council.

The successful partnership between Gloucestershire County Council and Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) continues with the Village Agents being employed and managed by GRCC.



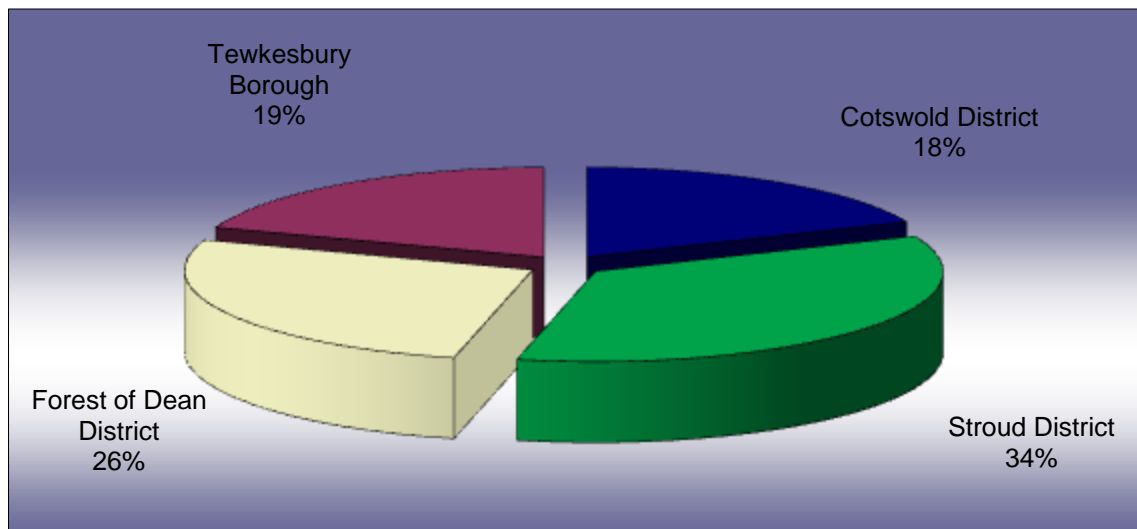
A steering group made up of key stakeholders has been put in place and the scheme managers will report directly on a quarterly basis to the group. Processes that were used to report to the Department for Work and Pensions will continue, collating demographic and numerical data using the existing gateway forms, with case studies and diaries providing anecdotal evidence.

This report focuses on quarter two of year four, October to December 2009. For earlier reports please go to [www.villageagents.org.uk](http://www.villageagents.org.uk) for further information.

## 1.0 REFERRALS – OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2009

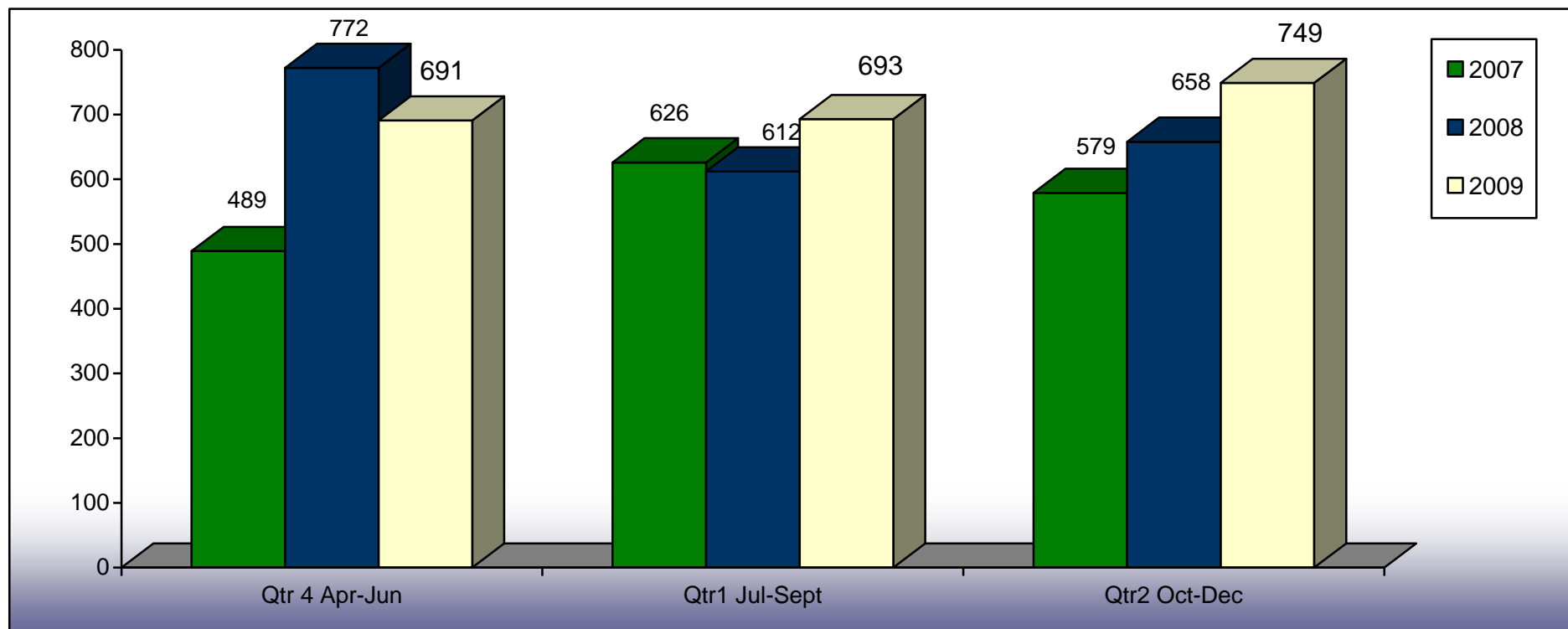
After each visit a Village Agent makes, they are required to fill in an online referral, 'gateway' form. The form collects demographic data, the nature of the problem and other information relevant to any follow up visit. The gateway form is then submitted to the required agency by the Village Agent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

During quarter two of year four, (October to December 2009) a total of 749 gateway forms were submitted by Village Agents. A percentage breakdown by district is shown below.

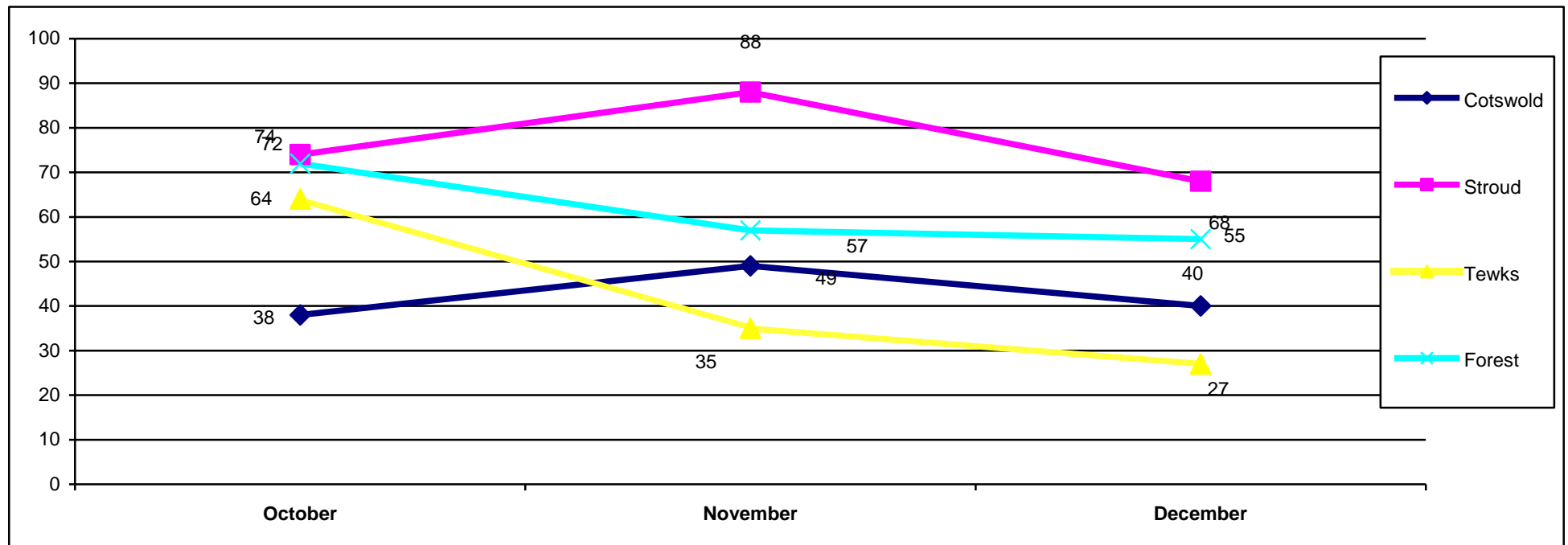


The district breakdown can vary by month and by quarter; during quarter 2 of year 4 Stroud District accounted for 34% of referrals – Cotswold District and Tewkesbury Village Agents submitted almost a fifth of referrals each (18% and 19% respectively) while Forest of Dean District Village Agents submitted over a quarter of referrals (26%).

Each quarter in 2009 has seen an increase in the numbers of gateway forms submitted by Village Agents when compared with 2008 with the exception of quarter 4 (April to June) which saw a slight decrease.



Quarter two year four (October to December) saw a significant increase for the second quarter running in the numbers of gateway forms submitted by Village Agents, from 658 in 2008 to 749 in 2009. This is to be expected as the scheme is now in its fourth year of operation and has become more widely known within the county, as well as having expanded significantly since the pilot scheme. Village Agents cover 203 parishes in Gloucestershire.



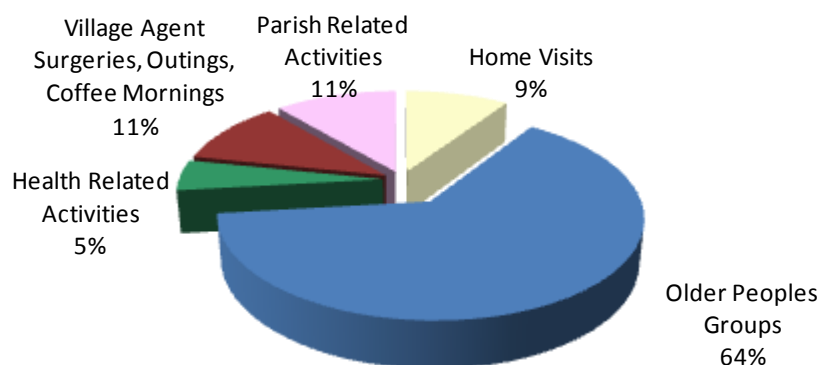
The spike in activity in Stroud and Cotswold Districts for November could in part be attributable to preparations for the coming winter, when issued leading to referrals to HIA, Warm & Well and Careline/Linkline are likely to concentrate the mind. However, Village Agent activity changes slightly over the Christmas period with focus on organising events such as carol services, lunches and outings, rather than focussing on home visits and referrals to agencies which is why there is a slight decline in referrals in December.

## 2.0 VILLAGE AGENT CONTACTS

Village Agents record the number of contacts that they have made during a particular month as part of their timesheet and monitoring process. During quarter two of year four Village Agents were in contact with nearly 9,000 people as part of their work. Please note that these contacts include older peoples groups that Village Agents attend regularly and also some repeat home visits. This will mean that there is an element of double counting, however it is important to record all contacts, repeat or otherwise as messages and issues raised can be different on each visit.

Contact definitions:

- Home visits – includes the client and anyone else present at that visit, family member, friend, neighbour etc
- Older Peoples Group – Group organised by the community for older people
- Parish Related Activity – Meetings with parish councils, WI's, parishioners met whilst putting up posters, leaflet drops, time liaising with parish magazines editors etc
- Health related activity – Contacts made with doctors, community nurses, virtual teams etc
- Village Agent Surgeries, Coffee Morning and Outings – people attending such events



During quarter 2, 49% of the contacts made with older people were made through older peoples clubs that take place around the county.

The table below shows the breakdown of contacts made with each group of people each month.

	October	November	December
Home Visits	297	290	247
Older Peoples Groups	1848	2462	1341
Health Related Activities	236	156	63
Surgery, Coffee Morning, Outings	236	397	301
Parish Related Activity	206	470	314
<b>Total</b>	<b>2823</b>	<b>3775</b>	<b>2266</b>

## 3.0 VILLAGE AGENT ACTIVITY QUARTER 2 YEAR 4

### MACMILLIAN SURVIVORSHIP PROJECT



The MacMillan survivorship project, aimed at supporting people living with and beyond cancer, launched on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, with an advertising campaign on Stagecoach buses running from 9<sup>th</sup> November. NHS Glos has distributed information to all GPs surgeries and Gloucestershire County Council were issuing posters to advertise the service to all county libraries. All Village Agents have undertaken training as part of the project, even Village Agents and one Community Agent have been given additional training with the intention of their working across the county to give support as needed, including in the areas not covered by the Village Agent network such as Cheltenham and Gloucester.

Uptake has so far been limited, but initial contacts are indicating a need for information about support groups and respite care, assistance with household support such as finding a cleaner, and problems with transport and getting to appointments. While these are matters that can be of great concern and importance to sufferers and their families, they are not necessarily matters that they would raise with health professionals.

### NEW VILLAGE AGENTS

One of the original Cotswold Village Agents George Hill, responsible for a double cluster in the north, retired on 28<sup>th</sup> December. Two new Village Agents have been appointed, Mo Griffiths and Steve Whincup, and they started on 1<sup>st</sup> December.

In addition to splitting George's cluster back into two, additional parishes have been formally included for the first time. These parishes are: Bourton-on-the-Hill, Batsford, Todenham and Moreton-in-Marsh. A new map reflecting the changes will be available shortly.

### PPF PILOT – COMMUNITY AGENTS FOR URBAN AREAS

Putting People First is funding a six-month pilot project trialling the Village Agent principle in the more urban areas of the county. The recruitment advert was placed in the county media in December and the closing date of applications was 11<sup>th</sup> January.

Six Community Agents will be recruited for the pilot project, to cover areas of Cheltenham and Gloucester, Stroud, Cam & Dursley, Ashchurch, and Cinderford. Interest has been high and interviews will take place on 27<sup>th</sup> January.