

Devon Churches Rural Forum

Community Activities Project - Linking church based community activities with those who need them - and community networking updates October 2018

Background for those new to the project ...

In all our communities there may be people who are lonely, socially isolated, or otherwise in need, with whom we, as churches, are not in contact. However, it is possible that such people are in contact with practitioners from other agencies including local health care or social services.

In very many towns and villages in Devon, our churches are providing activities such as coffee mornings, lunch clubs, knit and natter afternoons for and with the whole community, but without detailed local knowledge, practitioners in the other agencies (which may be based some distance from where a person lives) may not be aware of their existence.

Our aim is to provide a bridge between the activities our churches offer and the people who may benefit from them, but who are not already doing so, by making information about them available to those in the caring agencies via our website and also by uploading to the Devon County Council "Pinpoint" website of community activities

<https://www.pinpointdevon.co.uk/>

In this way (sometimes known as "social prescribing") a person may be "referred" to join in with one of our lunch clubs or coffee mornings and make new friends and join in with community activities. Often members of churches are also able to offer a lift to someone wanting to come and will always offer a special welcome and help a new person meet and feel relaxed with others.

As a Forum we are also exploring with other agencies in Devon how we can best support each other's work to care for all in our rural communities especially in the areas of dementia awareness and building dementia friendly communities and in combatting loneliness and social isolation.

If you have any questions, please email info@devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk.

Progress

Progress in collecting information is quite slow. So far I have details of 49 activities from 19 parishes/villages – so we have some way to go to cover all the villages in our rural county! However – huge thanks to all who have sent information so far. The activities include lunch clubs, coffee mornings, craft activities, messy church, computer clubs, board games afternoons, Men's Sheds and Ladies fellowships so far.

I am in the process of checking all the data received (particularly contacts for GDPR contact information) and it will be uploaded onto the Devon County Council Pinpoint website and go live on our website.

This is important work and our partners in the secular world who are meeting and caring for the people we want to reach are expressing increasing interest in our work.

Networking and Contacts

I have recently met with Kristian Tomblin (who is Communities and Commissioning Manager Directorate of Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity at Devon County Council). Part of our discussion centred around how to connect our activities with the social prescribing and community connectors work of the NHS and Social care services in Devon and we shall be following this up with colleagues. We are also interested in furthering discussions and understanding of how our rural communities “work” and serve each other, and the best way services can be provided. Kristian is joining us at our meeting on 29th October.

I am also shortly meeting with Lindsay Derbyshire who is the Community Connector for North Devon Volunteer Services working in partnership with Care Direct Plus North on 5th November. Here is a description of her work:

“I help to link people to groups, activities, services, in their area. The non-medical side of well-being. helping to find enablers, befrienders, help at home, keep fit classes, social clubs, re-igniting old hobbies and interests and even finding organisations who can help complete forms and other life admin - all the little things that individuals can find too over-whelming on their own.

Sometimes this may be in form of a paid for service, sometimes it could be through the voluntary sector, if I can't find the correct solution, I can research and refer onto larger organisations and charities that can help with providing equipment and advice through their own tailored level of expertise. Anything goes!

The majority of my referrals come via the Social Care Assessors, (but not exclusively) which is why I am based here with the Care Direct Plus team. When the 6-weeks term of re-enablement after a hospital stay comes to an end, or a worried neighbour rings in the express concern, I can help find an alternative to help the individuals remain as independent as possible.”

As you can see, Lindsay’s work is a very good match with of our own – where we are hoping to match up the activities we already offer with those who need them.

On 28th November I shall be meeting with Anne Clayton from Devon Living Options who are working to connect up particularly those who are disabled or deaf and lonely or socially isolated in our communities with activities they may enjoy.

How can you help?

1. Please encourage any churches you are in contact with to fill out one of our simple web forms for each of their activities.

The link is here

<http://www.devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk/directory-of-projectsactivities/submit-information-on-your-activity/>

I have also prepared some “slips” that will be available at the meeting that can be given out to people you meet to ask them to participate.

2. Secondly – the information gathering works best when someone proactively works to collect data from a particular area. Maurie Webber and Annie Jefferies did this for Tavistock and Okehampton deaneries and though even then several churches did not respond there were many that did. Totnes deanery is now also actively collecting information. So - could you be someone who could take on this role for an area of Devon?
3. And thirdly – collating and managing this information going forward is going to be quite job. Are you someone who could form a small team with me to help with this over the medium to longer term?

With MANY THANKS

Rev'd Penny Dobbin

Secretary DCRF and lead for the social and economic activities sub group.