

AXBRIDGE AND CHEDDAR LCN ACCESS TO SERVICES 16/05/2024

The discussion group topics were outlined by Doreen Smith, Connect Somerset Area Champion, who reminded the meeting that at the first LCN meeting the groups had discussed and agreed what was important to residents and businesses in our area? One of the topics put forward was Access to Services e.g. hospitals, GPs, mental health, and youth services.

The purpose of the discussion was to explore several areas and each group fed back the following.

Q1. Why is access to services is important (with a focus on local services clinical and non-clinical)?

- Access to services are more restricted in rural areas.
- Need local community to support those with needs.
- Important that local councillors and others e.g. Parish Councils/Clerks know where to signpost.
- Transport facilities limits the support which can be accessed but local community groups provide support.
- Village Agents can help identify needs and available help.
- Important for peoples' health and well-being.
- Avoid loneliness and isolation.
- Perhaps a need for a good neighbour scheme.
- Important for community cohesion.
- Services need to be local due to lack of transport.
- Physical access and information needed e.g. Village Agents.
- Online options not always useful as not easy to find way through.
- Local connection and word of mouth important.
- Local knowledge and local signposting and help to understand what service you need.
- But still need to travel to some services.

Q2. What are the benefits to individuals and our community to be able to access local services?

- Reduce loneliness and isolation.
- Will help our carbon footprint.
- Access to warm spaces.
- Keeping money locally.

- Create a sustainable community spirit.
- Activate ideas that may have been shelved.
- Opportunities for intergenerational activities.
- Build stronger communities.
- Reduce inequalities.
- Prevention is better than a cure!
- Enable residents to stay in their own homes and communities to enable access to care and support. Equally need support for residents with young families.
- Keeping rural communities vibrant and viable and not dormitory.
- Support remote working.
- Benefits to mental health and feeling supported.
- Help independence.
- Early intervention to reduce possibility of reaching crisis later on.

Q3. How do we identify where services and support are in the community and what would this research show?

- Village magazines provide local contacts and information.
- Village notice boards
- Village Facebook groups/social media and websites such as Nextdoor.
- Village Agents
- Local organisations such as WI
- Parish and Town Councils
- Word of mouth
- Churches
- Post offices and posties.
- Local shops
- The research would show where the current services and support can be accessed and identify gaps.
- Useful to have a directory with verified services.

Q4. How do we take our learning forward?

- Need a central point in each village where information including a diary of events can be collated and disseminated.
- Arrange meet and greet with residents in a friendly and welcoming space.

- A lot happens under the radar so research and local discussions may identify services and support we are not aware of.
- Hearing from lockdown what worked.
- Possible use of the parish and town plan.
- Effective communications keeping everyone updated and informed.

Other Comments

- We need to encourage volunteering.
- Encourage local involvement.
- Identify space that is affordable and accessible to offer 'one stop shops' where information can be sought.
- Agreed that we need to quickly action some ideas to demonstrate that we are listening and acting. This will encourage more people to be involved at LCN and local level.
- Work with the Village Agents.
- Organise a community event where people and organisations can be invited. (Currently being discussed with The Space)