



Improving Accessibility Shopping Scheme

The Promotion of Independence Best Value Review, carried out in 2003, aimed to keep older people living independently. Nottinghamshire County Council is one of eight authorities in the country to receive money as part of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Link Age Plus pilots. This aims to improve access and to develop services to help people aged 50+ stay independent, active and well.

Various barriers to older people accessing a healthy diet have been investigated and identified - especially for those without access to a car. Some barriers relate to the problem of actually getting to and from the shops, but supermarket layouts and packaging can also cause difficulties.

Accessibility mapping using Accession software identified areas of Ashfield and Mansfield districts where access to food, including healthy, affordable food, is an issue - specifically for people over 60, pensioners and people with limiting long-term illness.

Key messages

The target of completing 600 shops over the course of the scheme was well exceeded, despite the project getting off to a slow start because of the time taken to recruit and CRB check volunteers.

The outcomes of the Shopping Scheme demonstrate that it has had a large impact upon those people who have accessed it, either for short or longer periods of time. The scheme has enabled people to gain more confidence, feel less isolated and has alleviated worry and stress.

Background

The Shopping Scheme project commenced in July 2007 and is addressing the needs of older people who are not able to eat well for a range of reasons. It aims to improve their quality of life and general well being, helping them to remain living independently at home by:

- Providing better access to food and essential items, thus improving their health and diet;
- Providing access to nutritional advice;
- Reducing the risk of illness through eating out of date and unsuitable foods; and
- Improving physical and mental health through engagement with volunteers and the general public.

The food shopping project provides:

- Advice and information for people aged 50+ and their carers on how to access healthy, affordable food, essential goods and services in their local areas. This will include a comprehensive directory.
- Support to people with regard to their individual shopping needs, as well as healthy eating advice, matching them with a volunteer to give dedicated support. This includes arranging community transport to allow the person to go shopping unaided as well as assisted/accompanied shopping with a volunteer via volunteer's own transport, public transport or community transport (if qualify);

The food shopping service is available to people over 50 living in Ashfield and Mansfield districts who:

- are vulnerable or socially excluded;
- are registered blind or partially sighted;
- have no family or friends who are able to help;
- have lost confidence due to ill health;
- are a victim of crime;
- have medical reasons (e.g. depression or agoraphobia);
- are rurally isolated;
- are deaf or hard of hearing;
- their partner or carer is in hospital or going away;
- have suffered a bereavement;
- have mental health issues;
- have mobility issues; or are housebound.



Who is involved?

- People over 50 living in Ashfield and Mansfield districts and their carers
- Nottinghamshire Older Persons Advisory Group
- Supporting People
- Age Concern Nottingham and Nottinghamshire (operate the scheme)
- Shopping Scheme steering group - representation from Older Persons Advisory Group, Community Transport, Community and Voluntary service, Primary Care Trust and Nottinghamshire County Council
- LinkAge Plus

The problems and how we tackled them

- The project took longer to get people on board than was originally anticipated
- The project took a few months to build up the numbers of people using the service.

Outcomes and impact

Up to the end of August 2008, 643 contacts (i.e. people receiving help) were made as a result of the scheme; this figure was higher than the target set;

Case studies have identified individuals who were unable to shop due to short-term medical or family problems, or who had ongoing health problems and lacked the confidence needed. The scheme has been shown to make an enormous difference to people's lives, building confidence, facilitating a more varied diet and ensuring stored food is rotated and consumed within its use-by date. In cases of short-term need the volunteer can be relocated and go on to make a difference in another person's life.

What could have been done better

The way the scheme was devised meant that it was always going to take a while to build up momentum. This process could, however, have been helped by having volunteers ready and CRB checked for when their services were needed.

Next steps

- Continued promotion of the service to those in need of the service in the target areas
- Expansion of the service into other areas of the County where it is needed
- Start to provide shopping advice and guidance to those utilising the scheme

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