

## Village Agent Update August 23

I thought it was time for another update from me about the work myself and other VA colleagues have been doing in the area over the past few busy weeks.

We started a project in March in the RUH with our partner AGE UK bringing the services of B&NES Wellbeing Hub to patients, visitors and staff so they have direct access to services, information and advice that supports people to live independently at home. Following on from this work, we have become partners in a brilliant new project there that can help to streamline the discharge process for patients by improving access to a range of support B&NES residents can receive when they are discharged and go home, minimizing the risk of re admission. And, we also now have a presence in St Martins and Paulton hospitals too.

My employer, The [West of England Rural Network](#) have for several years been successfully running a Community Oil Buying Scheme in the B&NES area. Its free to join for anyone who is 70 years or older and for anyone else there is a £20 membership fee. Typically members pay 6 or 7 pence per litre LESS than average high street prices saving a minimum of £120 per year. For more information call Karen on: 07825 202043 or email [karen@wern.org.uk](mailto:karen@wern.org.uk).

We work in partnership with the [Centre for Sustainable Energy](#) and last month I asked them to visit a resident I have been supporting in a local village to do a mini audit of how much they were paying monthly for their energy bill and do checks on other "utility" usage and expenses. They got their energy payments reduced by £45 a month, with a £131 rebate and their mobile phone cost down by £10 a month. That added up to an annual saving of £664 + £131 = £795! This resident lives in a one bedroom bungalow. That was a result! (What could the potential savings be in a larger home?) And with the help of Age UK we are supporting the resident in applying for Attendance Allowance which is likely to bring in another £272 per month, £3264 per annum....tax free and it's not Means tested....and we are supporting them to apply for a Blue Badge.

**Question**.....Would you ever NOT claim your old age pension?..... Of course not, you are entitled to it and have paid your NI contributions for years! So why is it, other payments people could be entitled to aren't claimed?

As a Village Agent I often come across residents who could but aren't claiming Attendance Allowance, or Carers Allowance, or Disability Living Allowance and Council Tax benefit. I am now finding more residents I come across in my villages are "asset rich but cash poor" and they aren't claiming the benefits they are entitled to, indeed some people don't feel its right that they do. But some are struggling to make ends meet. It's currently estimated £15bn goes unclaimed, up to 3.4 million pensioners are not claiming Attendance Allowance, 400,000 are not claiming Carers Allowance and many hundreds of thousands more aren't claiming other allowances and grants **they are entitled to**.

If you want to find out more for yourself or someone you know, please get in touch. If you, or someone you know needs information or support to remain living independently at home, please get in touch. Everything I do is confidential and free and often it's just a phone call that's needed, tel: 01275 333700 or email [chantal@wern.org.uk](mailto:chantal@wern.org.uk);