



Community Information Network Oxfordshire

What difference has it made?

An overview of case study evidence

September 2015

1 Introduction

In May 2014, Age UK Oxfordshire launched a Community Information Network (CIN) in Oxfordshire with the aim of delivering three main **outcomes** for individuals.

1. To **reduce isolation** by enabling people to feel supported by and part of their local community: *I feel confident and am able to take part in a range of community and social activities that are available in my locality.*
2. To enable people to **live as independently as possible**: *I have accurate, easy to understand information about care and support;*
3. To enable people to have **choice and control** over how they live their lives: *I have the information I need to make real choices and am able to speak to people face to face who know about social care and financial support and can make the support I need to happen.*

Between January and March 2015, Oxfordshire County Council's Joint Commissioning Team carried out a review of the Community Information Network contract. The review included interviews, questionnaires and observations involving 95 service users/link workers and 40 staff/volunteers plus an assessment of the accuracy of the monitoring data. All ten areas of quality monitoring were rated "green" and the overall rating was "green".

This supplementary report is intended to provide a flavour of the work of the Community Information Network and includes:

- twelve case study examples, from information supplied by Age UK Oxfordshire Community Networkers, to illustrate a range of ways in which the Community Information Network is accessed by people in Oxfordshire and the outcomes for individuals;
- a summary of the key findings from these case studies.

Report prepared by:

Margaret Melling
MM Consulting Limited
margaret@mmconsulting.org.uk
07958 239857

2 Differences for individuals – case study examples

The following twelve case studies are from reports from across all localities in the county by Age UK Oxfordshire Community Networkers in 2014 and 2015.

Cases have been grouped under the most relevant outcome heading although some could be considered to have delivered more than one of these outcomes.

OUTCOME 1: Reducing isolation

1. Freddie - caring for his wife with dementia
2. Mary – isolated after moving to the area
3. Patrick - a victim of doorstep crime
4. Patricia – losing confidence after a series of falls
5. Henry – at risk of falling and socially isolated
6. Walter – recently bereaved
7. Brian’s father - housebound and at risk of falling

OUTCOME 2: Living independently

8. Betty - worried about finances
9. Charles – living with ill health and in poor housing
10. Cynthia – in poor health and with limited mobility

OUTCOME 3: Choice and control

11. Sarah – coping with her father’s diagnosis of dementia
12. Richard - needing respite from caring

All names of individuals have been changed and references to the geographical location of individuals or groups have been removed.

OUTCOME 1: Reducing isolation

1. Freddie - caring for his wife with dementia NOW HAS personalised advice on suitable social activities

Freddie is a stroke survivor, with slight problems to his speech, who cares for his wife with dementia.

He got in touch with the Community Information Network through the Stroke Association and was looking for help in finding social opportunities that would be suitable for them both.

After talking through their interests and difficulties and checking that they were in touch with dementia and carers support services, the Community Networker suggested the option of learning IT in a friendly community cafe.

Freddie and his wife were pleased to have received some personalised advice and to find a local activity meeting both of their needs.

2. Mary – isolated after moving to the area NOW HAS new friends and is increasing in confidence

Mary moved to the area to be closer to her family after an illness. She lives alone and doesn't drive.

She was given a Community Information Network newsletter by a friend who thought Mary might be interested in joining in with some of the groups.

The Community Networker supported her to join a book group and, as her confidence has grown, Mary felt able to join a coach trip and meet others in a similar situation to her.

“From one small act of kindness and the support of my local network, I have made lots of new friends and have felt more confident to go out and try new things”.

Mary

3. Patrick - a victim of doorstep crime NOW HAS increasing confidence and contacts for help in the future

Patrick suffers from a heart condition, has mobility problems and feels lonely, especially in the winter months.

He was referred to the Community Information Network by the Police Community Support Officer team as a victim of doorstep crime.

Patrick did not want his family to know about the scam and the Community Networker referred him to Trading Standards for advice and to a benefits adviser. The Networker has also organised a regular visit from the Good Neighbour scheme and information about other groups including a local lunch club.

Patrick is feeling more confident and now knows who he can contact should he need further help or information.

4. Patricia – losing confidence after a series of falls NOW HAS increasing social contact

Patricia is in her 80s with some memory problems. She lives alone in social housing and has been widowed for nearly 2 years. She suffered a series of falls and, as a result, was losing confidence.

Patricia contacted the helpline and was visited at home by the Community Networker who found that her main problem was social isolation and, after some gentle persuasion, referred her to Phone Friends.

The Networker also referred Patricia to the Falls service and the benefits team and has liaised with the Council about widening her pathway to allow her to use her mobility scooter.

All of this work has helped Patricia to increase in confidence and become less isolated.

5. Henry – at risk of falling and socially isolated NOW HAS improved physical balance and strength and a new group of friends

Henry has issues with balance and a lack of strength in his legs.

At an afternoon cream tea, he came into contact with a Community Networker who suggested trying Short Mat Bowls. At first Henry had trouble standing and bowling and was ready to give up, but, with the support and encouragement of the volunteers, he has been able to attend almost every session.

Henry really appreciates the help and support he was given. He believes his balance and strength is improving and he has made new friends.

“I didn’t realise how going to a simple afternoon cream tea could change my life for the better”

Henry

6. Walter – recently bereaved and in his 90s NOW HAS a strong friendship and has become an active volunteer

Walter is in his 90s, is recently bereaved and, although reasonably active, finds evenings difficult.

In conversation over a cup of tea at a community café, the Community Networker discovered that Walter is a worldwide expert on two English authors and writes and talks about history. Attending the same café was Graham in his 80s, also bereaved and with a similar interest in writing.

Walter and Graham were introduced to each other by the Networker, have become firm friends and are now volunteering together to run a writing group.

OUTCOME 2: Living independently

7. Brian's father - housebound and at risk of falling NOW HAS options for companionship and support

Brian's father is at risk of falling and cannot leave his extra-care flat without an escort.

Brian contacted the Community Information Network by email.

The Community Networker recommended an assessment by an Occupational Therapist and a review of his father's medication by his GP. The Networker also provided options for companionship and support - the Good Neighbour befriending scheme and costs for assistant/companion services and home visiting eye care services.

Brian found the information very helpful.

Many, many thanks for your email which is incredibly helpful. What a mine of information!

Brian

8. Betty - worried about finances NOW HAS information about housing options and benefits

Betty is in her 80s and has lived abroad for many years. A year ago she returned to the UK to be near family and friends.

Very worried that she would soon be unable to afford the rent on her bungalow, Betty contacted the Community Information Network directly by phone.

The Community Networker used her local knowledge to give information about other local housing options and referred her for a benefits check.

Betty was relieved to find someone that could offer helpful information and advice.

9. Charles – living with ill health and in poor housing NOW HAS a home adapted to his physical needs

Charles is in poor health and lives with his adult children, none of whom contribute financially and each with their own problems.

Concerned that his house was very damp and uncomfortable, Charles contacted the Community Information Network by phone asking for help.

The Community Networker organised visits by the Housing provider and then an Occupational Therapist. As a result Charles now has a bath rail and a railing at the main door and has applied to the Council for an assessment of his housing need.

10. Cynthia – in poor health and with limited mobility NOW HAS skills in IT and access to online sources of support

Cynthia, from an ethnic minority background, has limited mobility and needs help with shopping and with her frequent trips to the GP and hospital.

She was looking for help with IT to be able to communicate with friends and family overseas and to shop online.

With the support of her Community Networker at her local Community Centre, Cynthia has achieved her aims and, in addition, is using the internet to find out about disability support, healthcare, sources of support for her carer and local services and activities.

The IT group has been a great way for Cynthia to meet new friends and, she believes, has increased her sense of worth and purpose.

“I can't begin to express how much these activities have enriched my life”

Cynthia

OUTCOME 3: Choice and control

11. Sarah – coping with her father’s diagnosis of dementia NOW HAS timely information to make real choices

Sarah lives with and cares for her father.

She first came into contact with the Community Information Network via her local Women’s Institute and shared her anxiety about the possibility of her father being diagnosed with dementia.

The Community Networker provided information and put her in touch with sources of support.

12. Richard - needing respite from caring NOW HAS access to sources of ongoing support

Richard has epilepsy and cares for his mother who has dementia. He gets tired and sometimes has memory problems because of his medication.

He met up with the Community Networker at a drop in session looking for information about his mum’s condition and how he might have some respite from caring.

The Community Networker gave him information about dementia and caring for someone with dementia which Richard found very helpful.

She also referred Richard to Carers Oxfordshire and has recently visited the local Alzheimer’s Carers group to find him now happily settled into the group and discussing the support that he and his Mum were receiving.

3 The work of the Community Information Network

Reasons for people seeking support

This sample of 12 case studies has highlighted a range of reasons for people seeking support or being referred to the Community Information Network, including:

- Need support managing health conditions (including dementia) and/or limited mobility
- Support to caring role
- New to the area
- Recent bereavement
- Victim of crime
- Financial problems
- Loneliness and isolation

Ways that people have made contact

This sample of case studies has also illustrated a wide range of ways that people come into contact with the Community Information Network..

- directly by phone or email
- after being given a newsletter by a friend
- after being referred by the Police Community Support Officer team
- via the local Women's Institute
- through the Stroke Association
- at a Community Information Network drop in
- at a social group or community café

Note that this is not all of the reasons for seeking support or ways that people make contact with the CIN – just those used by the cases described in this report.

Differences made to the people's lives in their own words

As well as illustrating the agreed outcomes, these cases have highlighted the differences made to the lives of individuals in their own words. These range from being better informed and having access to practical and emotional support to making new friends and finding a new purpose through volunteering.

The Community Information Network Team

