

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Ashton Hayes

SNOW

Angels



Case Study

**ASHTON HAYES
PARISH COUNCIL**

Ash-Worth Time Bank

Linking People Together
Tel.: (01829) 751398


SnowAngels

 **Cheshire West
and Chester**

Ashton Hayes Snow Angels

Ashton Hayes is a small village about six miles east of Chester at the foot of the sandstone ridge and has a population of just over 1,200 people.

The village has a mix of housing and has a wide range of facilities including a local primary school, pre-school nursery, a community shop including a post office, and community halls and leisure facilities - the nearest GP surgery is at Kelsall just over 2 miles away. The Parish Council boundary includes the main village and nearby farms and covers just over 500 hectares.

During the consultation for the Parish Plan carried out in 2009 the positive things that residents identified were the local facilities particularly the shop and Post office, and the best thing about the village was the "friendliness, sense of community and village life".

The two worst things about the village were lack of public transport and lack of traffic controls

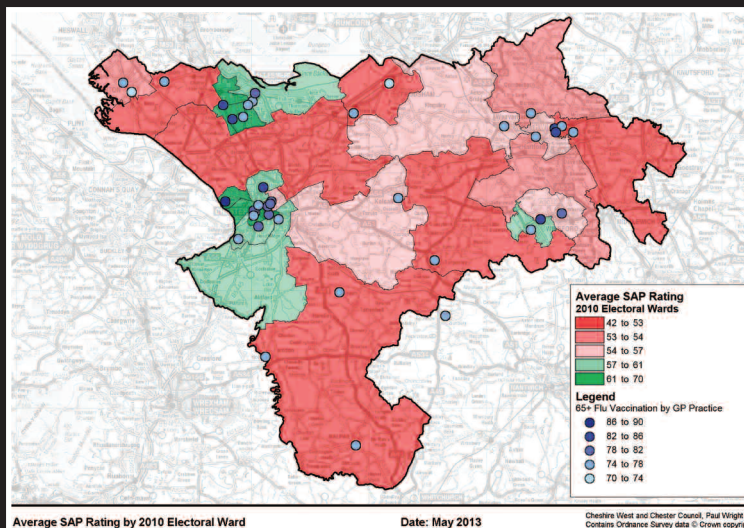
www.ashtonhayespc.co.uk/reports/parish-plan-reports-2009

The village has a strong sense of community and is aiming to be England's first carbon neutral village and has received a number of national awards. The Parish Council have been working on a community resilience plan and were interested in the Snow Angels project to develop community resilience in the village as well as supporting its more vulnerable residents during cold weather.



Needs Assessment for the village

Ashton Hayes is in the local authority area of Cheshire West and Chester which has one of the highest rates of excess winter deaths in the North West.



The village is in one of the areas with the highest rates of excess winter deaths during the period 2003 – 2010 in the area. In Cheshire West and Chester nearly 80% of excess winter deaths are in the over 75's.

The housing stock in the area also has the a lower than average SAP (a measure of energy efficiency) rating of 42 – 53 (the recommended SAP rating to keep people out of fuel poverty is 65) and the nearest GP surgery has one of the lowest rates of flu vaccinations for over 65's with 70 – 74% in the Cheshire West area (Affordable Warmth Strategy 2010 – 2013 Cheshire West and Chester Council. The project received funding through the Warm Homes Healthy People fund as part of the Council's overall application to the Department of Health.

About Snow Angels

Snow Angels CIC is a social enterprise which works with local communities to promote community resilience to deal with a range of issues which communities may face including cold weather, flooding etc.

The scheme is designed with the local community to meet specific needs although there are some key features including:

The social enterprise works with local community groups to ensure that the scheme is sustainable after its first year of operation.

Volunteers are recruited and trained to a common set of standards including adult safeguarding, lone working, safe winter driving.



Volunteers are provided with hi-vis jackets, ID badges and equipment and carry out a range of tasks to support customers including clearing snow, shopping, collecting prescriptions, providing transport to health appointments etc.

Customers are identified who are potentially vulnerable – for cold weather this will include people over 75 years of age, older people living alone, people with respiratory problems (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or COPD), and families with very young children.

Telephone contact is maintained with customers throughout the scheme on a weekly basis to make sure that everything is OK and preventative action can be taken when appropriate.



Customers are visited initially by the Snow Angel volunteers and registered onto the scheme with details of next of kin, GP, spare key location etc.

The scheme is monitored through a software package to make sure that all the actions required are undertaken and records secure. Partnerships are developed with local organisations and statutory authorities including Highways and Emergency Planning, Age UK, Police, Fire and Rescue Service, and NHS staff and Snow Angels is highlighted in the national report about the Cost of Cold from Age UK www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/Campaigns/The_cost_of_cold_2012.pdf

Low Carbon Communities Network

Ashton Hayes is part of the Low Carbon Communities Network for Cheshire and Warrington and through the Network heard about the Snow Angels partnership which recruited volunteers in a pilot scheme in Northwich, Cheshire, to help older and more vulnerable people during cold weather during the winter of 2011/12.

Although the model was developed for extreme cold weather, it is applicable to other extremes such as heatwaves and flooding. The scheme was promoted through the Council's Low Carbon Communities network and some of the members of the network are now looking at climate resilient communities.

Councillor Jane Colville from Ashton Hayes Parish Council said: "We want to integrate community resilience into our Neighbourhood Planning process. Snow Angels is a practical and engaging way to get people thinking about community resilience, and will be a springboard for wider awareness and action.



Communities already support each other during cold weather, and we want to complement this neighbourly activity to ensure that the most vulnerable people get the assistance they need. We have worked with a range of partners to set up Snow Angels, learning from experiences in Northwich. In particular, we have been able to make connections to the local community and established groups, such as the Time Bank, which will coordinate the Snow Angels volunteers and enable the project to get up and running quickly." Briefings for Elected Members, Briefing Note 5: Creating Resilient Communities, University of Liverpool, Environment Agency, CLASP (2013) www.claspinfo.org/news/new-briefings-elected-members



Customer Recruitment

The starting point for identifying people who may need support through cold weather period was the assisted bin list through the local authority and this identified just over 30 properties that currently have assistance with refuse collection.

The local GP surgery and Health Visitors were given the opportunity to refer people onto the scheme, and local organisations including the community shop, Parish Council and Ash-Worth Time Bank identified people who were potentially vulnerable.

The local Police Officers for the area attended the training sessions so that they were also aware of the support available and would know that there was a local scheme in place in case of heavy snowfalls and wintry conditions.

Just over 20 older people registered on the scheme (most of whom were over 80 years old) and the volunteers supported these people as well as clearing snow from communal areas.

Ashton Hayes Snow Angels

The volunteers were recruited through local publicity in the Parish Council newsletter, posters around the village, letters from the Primary School to local families, word of mouth, and Ash-Worth Timebank.

Over 40 volunteers were recruited from the village of all ages and they all took part in a short training session (younger volunteers under 14 years old were registered as helpers for adult Snow Angels). Volunteers were asked what kind of tasks they were happy to undertake and when they were likely to be available. All the volunteers were DBS checked.

As part of the Snow Angels project a launch was held with some pupils from the local primary school who had the opportunity to explore a vintage Dennis F7 Pump Escape Fire Engine made in 1952 and one of the vintage fire engines in Cheshire.

The then Chair of the Parish Council Garry Charnock said "it has been fantastic to see the support for the Snow Angels initiative - it has caught the imagination of people of all ages in the village".

The event was supported by staff, Snow Angel volunteers and councillors from Cheshire West and Chester Council, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, Ash-Worth Time Bank, and Ashton Hayes Parish Council.



Pen Portrait

Enid is a lady in her eighties who lives alone in the village and her house has limited heating. She was initially reluctant to join the Snow Angels scheme as a customer but registered on the scheme following an introductory visit by one of the Snow Angel volunteers.

She was visited by several Snow Angel volunteers delivering shopping and hot meals. During a cold weekend one of the Snow Angels called to check that she was OK and found her lying on the floor. She spent a while in hospital and is now convalescing in a residential home prior to returning to her home.

She has now agreed to some work being carried out at her home to make it safer and warmer in the future.



Evaluation

The scheme was evaluated through surveys to both the customers and volunteers and the celebration event held at the local WI Hall.

All the volunteers who responded to the survey wanted to be involved in the future and six of the volunteers were interested in helping to develop and manage the scheme in future.

"Nice to help people who need it. We will all grow older and may need help"

"It was a privilege to help"

"My husband and I are relatively new to the village and it gave us an opportunity to meet people and help others"

"I feel that we provided a good service that helped older people feel safe. Clearing paths of snow helped with people visiting, many people choose to stay indoors when the snow was on the ground. I believe we carry on next winter in the same vein."

Customers were asked what they thought of the scheme and what difference it had made.

The overwhelming response was that the scheme had made them feel safer and reassured during the cold weather.

Specific comments included:

- "My husband and I are old and are grateful for assistance in bad weather particularly on our steep drive"
- "It was very comforting to know there was help at hand". We joined the scheme "Because of our age and the remoteness of our home in a single track road."
- "I can't believe the support we have received in the village. My friends are jealous"
- I'm sure that other villages would be glad of the Snow Angels project
- "I didn't fall over once in the snow because my paths were cleared "

- "Thank you all for the wonderful service you all provided in the snow. It was very much appreciated and we were very grateful "

One of the services provided by the Snow Angels was to pick up shopping from the community shop www.ourvillageshop.org.uk for older people during the cold weather.

"We couldn't live without the shop"

This was very successful and resulted in more local people using the community shop including volunteers and customers according to the Community Shop Manager.

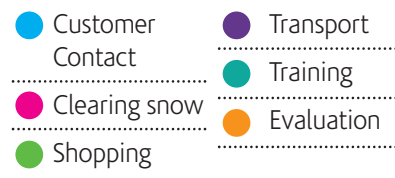
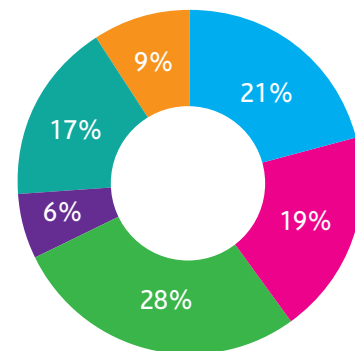
All the customers were asked if there were other services that they needed and the most requested services were lifts to health appointments and a handy person scheme.

Main Volunteering Activities

The main activities were keeping in contact with the customers on a weekly basis (this became daily during snowy and icy conditions), clearing snow and gritting, shopping and paying bills, transport to appointments, transport, and evaluation activities including a filming session and the celebration event. All the customers were registered during an initial visit and received a winter warmth pack which included a Message in a Bottle, warm clothing, leaflets and crime prevention items.

The total number of volunteering hours on the scheme was more than 350. During the scheme a number of other people volunteered to help in other ways including knitting half blankets for customers, and cooking and delivering hot meals.

Ash-Worth Time Bank acted as the anchor organisation for the project and were responsible for keeping in contact with the local volunteers, phoning the customers once a week, deploying volunteers when necessary. Taking part in the scheme raised the profile of the organisation and the project resulted in 9 people being prepared to start volunteering with Timebank in the future.



Outcomes

The key outcomes from the project included older people feeling safer and supported in their own homes, reduced social isolation, a strong sense of teamwork between the volunteers, improved recognition of Timebank and new volunteers, and increased community resilience in the village.

The project received £8,500 from the Department of Health through the Warm Homes Healthy People. The cost per customer is £29 per week per customer.

This included all the start-up costs for the village including equipment, and volunteer training and handbook etc - in future years with the same customer numbers this would be in the region of £10 per week per customer or £3,000.

The potential savings to the scheme include: reduction in falls, reduction in admissions to hospital, improvements in discharge times for patients, and a reduction in carer costs. Whilst it is possible to quantify these using a Social Return on Investment model the numbers are small and a projected forecast would be unreliable.

Area of Work	Achieved
Increased take up of advice for keeping warm	21
Clearing snow and ice	44
Weekly check-up calls to customers	240
Introductory visits to customers for registration	20
Increase in volunteering	40
Volunteering hours	350
Referrals to other programmes of support	17

Ways forward

The Parish Council are committed to running the Snow Angels project next winter and there is now a small group of volunteers who are willing to help to manage and develop the scheme.

They are keen to integrate the project into their wider community resilience plans for the village and to look at developing the project to meet the needs of other potential events, for example localised flooding, prolonged power cuts etc.



Conclusion

The Snow Angels scheme aimed to help older people in the village during the cold weather, increase volunteering, and help to build a more resilient community and succeeded in these aims.

The Parish Council played an integral part in the project and is keen to continue the scheme next winter.

The Parish Plan described life before the Second World War as "There was a real sense of community, with everyone looking out for each other.

As the nearest doctor was in Kelsall and a call out cost 6d (2.5p), which very few could afford, people used their own remedies and cared for each other".

Whilst the NHS has meant that people do not need to pay for medical services, transport to the local GP surgery was one of the key volunteering activities. Snow Angels re-affirmed that people care for each other in the village.



For more information please contact:

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Ash-worth Time Bank - Susan Ross-Turner or Caroline Massos on tel: **01829 751 398**, email: ash-worthtime@hotmail.co.uk or visit: www.ash-worthtimebank.org.uk

Snow Angels CIC - Cathy Boyd on tel: **0788 151 0304**, email: cathy@snowangels.org.uk or visit the website at: www.snowangels.org.uk

Low Carbon Communities – Peter Bulmer on tel: **01244 972 427** or email: peter.bulmer@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk