

Care Schemes

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What is a Care Scheme?

Care Schemes are 'good neighbour' schemes that provide easy access to help and support, acting as a safety net for everyone in a town or village, regardless of age.

They can help to lessen the impact on a community caused by the decline in services and facilities such as public transport, shops, Post Offices, doctor's surgeries and pubs. They can also help to reduce feelings of isolation and exclusion experienced by some individuals if families and friends move away in the search for employment, education or affordable housing.

Having access to the services of a care scheme can help extend the length of time people are able to remain living independently in their own homes.

How do they work?

A small group of volunteers forms a co-ordinating committee to oversee the running of the scheme. A larger group of people volunteer the skills and time they are willing to offer, and a register of volunteers is then drawn up.

The scheme purchases a mobile phone, which serves as the main contact point for anyone seeking help or advice. A duty officer answers the call and consults the register to find an appropriate volunteer. They then arrange for the help to be provided. Organisers can also act as a link to other sources of help, offering information and guidance where necessary.

The kind of help that might be offered includes:

- domestic support such as shopping, cooking, dog walking or befriending
- transport to visit relatives or for leisure purposes if normal transport is not accessible, lifts to appointments at the doctor or hospital, or to facilities such as day centres and lunch clubs
- household assistance including form filling, letter writing, minor repairs and maintenance
- collection of pensions and prescriptions
- practical assistance with minor household repairs such as changing a light bulb or taking rubbish to the tip

The help provided is free (except where real costs such as petrol or parking fees are incurred), but people may make donations if they wish.

What support is given to schemes?

BRCC has a dedicated Field Officer, who is able to encourage and support the development of schemes and offer information and guidance when needed. Start-up grants are available for all new schemes to help with the initial costs such as mobile phone purchase, and contribution towards insurance cover etc. Volunteers can attend care scheme network meetings that offer a chance to share experiences and good ideas.

Care Schemes are a BRCC initiative, in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council.