

31st July 2024

AGE CONCERN LIPHOOK EVENTS REPORT

The Events division of Age Concern Liphook has gone from its initiation in September 2022 to a very strong and active organisation today. We started as a drop in 'Cuppa club' two Mondays a month, and now we offer these meeting dates, plus a minimum of one shopping and one Day Trip every month except August.

The Cuppa Club, meet in the Canada Room, at the Millennium Hall twice a month on a Monday, 2pm until 4pm. We offer transport to those isolated in the community by utilising the Age Concern minibus, as well as a few of our valuable volunteers who pick up and drop off members on their way to help.

The club has socialisation and fun at its core and has a very relaxed feel, and regularly supports on average 15 members at each meeting. We offer participation in word games and puzzles, team and individual games, such as Play Your Cards Right, Bingo, skittles, and various board games. If members wish to take part they are supported to do so, and if they just wish to sit and chat then that is what they do. Getting together and having a good chin wag over a cuppa is vital to minimising isolation and vulnerability in those we assist and at the Cuppa club there is always a buzz of chatter and giggles.

The Day Trips operate once a month in the winter and twice a month in the summer. We have visited places such as many local garden centres, pubs and restaurants from Littlehampton for lunch right by the river, Southsea for Fish & chips on the beach, and of course the favourite Carvery at the Woolpack in Chichester or the Hen and Chicken at Upper Froyle. We again utilise the Age Concern minibus for these trips supported by at least 2 volunteers and their cars. We frequently take up to 22 members out on these trips and often have a waiting list on file should anyone drop out at the last minute.

The most regular comment from the members on these trips is how lovely it is to leave Liphook, and to have the company of such lovely people. As a result of this many of the members have become friends outside of the group and phone each other for a chat. They have even commented how lovely it is to go to Sainsburys with family and to bump into friends they have made at the club and on the trips.

The monthly shopping trip came into existence after the last bank in Liphook closed. With many of our members unable to walk to the Post Office to access the suggested replacement banking facility, and the village not having a suitable bus service that facilitates a short trip to the bank, we started a bus trip to Petersfield where there is still access to 3 or 4 banks. We started with utilising the Age Concern minibus and again within weeks it became so popular that we now take the minibus and one or two volunteer's cars to transport everyone, and we still often have to turn people away who would like to participate. On the trip the members are collected for home just after 11 am and dropped off in the car park by Waitrose at approximately 11:30am. The members are then left to do their own shopping and banking and then they all tend to meet in one of the cafes for a coffee and or lunch before meeting the transport at 1;30pm and going home.

To make all these events happen, I, as the Events Manager am totally reliant on the support of my team of 9 volunteers, some of whom are here tonight. I am very aware that our success is very much due to their support and willingness to do whatever it takes to help our members, many of whom help me on multiple events each month, and for this I am extremely grateful.

With all our activities becoming increasingly oversubscribed, it is very evident that we need to encourage additional volunteers and event Co-ordinators to join our team, who would be willing and able to offer additional shopping and Day Trips so that as word of mouth highlights the support available in our village for those struggling with loneliness and a loss of independence we can as an organisation meet this need.

In the near future we are planning an event which will be held at the Millennium Hall on Monday 21st October, 2pm to 4 pm. We will be offering an afternoon of singing and dancing with a cream tea. There will be transport available for those wishing to attend and Tickets will be available shortly at £3pp.

We would like to take this opportunity to invite all local groups assisting those over the age of 55 years of age to come along and join us for what we hope will be a fun afternoon.

Penny Leigh

Events Manager

Age Concern Liphook