

The Social Welfare opportunities and arrangements available to the residents of Ashton Hayes and Horton Cum Peel area.

Introduction

The purpose of this piece is to identify the social welfare opportunities and arrangements which currently exist and are available to local people living in and around the village and also to highlight any potential future developments and to consider the gaps in provision and how these might be remedied over time.

The term Social Welfare is being used in its broadest sense and includes that which is accepted as being a statutory service and entitlement through to that which is very informal and may in fact be an indirect consequence of some other activity.

Statutory Services

The people of Ashton Hayes access statutory services as commissioned and/or provided by Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWAC) or by local Health Commissioning bodies. These include services provided by GPs, Hospitals, Schools, Colleges, the Police, Adult Social Care and Children's services together with Highways, Environment services and Planning. It also includes those voluntary organisations that have a contract with the Council or with health providers to provide specific services.... some examples of this are Age UK, Crossroads, Making Space and Rural Community Services.

Local Services

The area in question is relatively small comprising approximately 420 households. Ashton Hayes and Horton cum Peel have been fortunate in being able to support and play host to the **Ash-Worth Timebank** which offers a wide range of opportunities and activities to local people in Ashton Hayes, Mouldsworth and other local rural villages. Individuals involved with Timebank as volunteers or service recipients can benefit greatly from the experience afforded them.

Volunteering can, as significant pieces of research has shown, increase a person's feeling of wellbeing, community involvement and health. The services Timebank offer are all free of charge and this charitable organisation is currently funded by the Big Lottery and delivers a number of activities, from a range of holistic therapy sessions through to clubs and group gatherings, exercise, art, craft and language classes to the offer of some very practical assistance such as decorating, DIY, transport and shopping. Membership of Timebank covers both those who volunteer their time and those who receive the services and both positions are valued highly. The siting within the community of an organisation that facilitates volunteering on this scale is significant and it is increasingly recognised that participating in volunteering activities is something that can be liberating and fulfilling for those who are involved. Our own Ashworth Timebank has historically tended to be involved with the older

residents of the area whilst some other Timebanks in different parts of the country focus more on the needs of the younger generation.

The presence of Timebank has most recently enabled us to introduce and organise the delivery of a Snow Angels scheme to the village, something that would have been much more difficult had Timebank not been in place already.

Snow Angels is a pilot initiative which commenced in 2012/13 and is running for a further year at least. It aims to provide support and security to those who may be vulnerable and at some physical, emotional and social risk during the worst of the winter weather. A very positive response has been had to the request for local volunteers and these are from a wide range of ages and consist of both men and women. These volunteers have shown willingness to undertake tasks which range from snow clearing to providing company and comfort to people, to collecting prescriptions, helping people with shopping and providing some transport.

Depending on the further outcomes and experience of this specific scheme it may well be that such an arrangement can be sustained and further developed locally so that local residents have the benefit of knowing that in the event of an emergency, be it natural or manmade, it would be possible for the community to respond in a positive and planned way to the benefit of all including those who are most vulnerable. A working group [the Community Resilience Group] which reports to the Parish Council has been developing a plan for application in such a situation.

Rural Community Services [West Cheshire] is a small charitable organisation that operates a few services for older people and their carers living in villages of West Cheshire including Ashton Hayes. They run five day clubs [Opal clubs], one day a week. One of these is in Kelsall and older people from Ashton can and do attend. The clubs are run by local volunteers and rely wholly on their time, commitment and skill. These clubs are greatly valued by those who attend who are amongst the oldest in our community and will include people who without such opportunities for social contact and company would become very isolated and lonely.

Rural Community Services are continually expanding the service offered locally, with one of the more recent additions being a service which attempts to provide informal carers of older people with a break and time to themselves even if only for a few hours a week. The intention is also to assist the carer to access opportunities available to them that will enhance their lives. Other services being rolled out across the rural areas the organisation covers include a service which introduces and supports older people in accessing and using computers and the provision of a range of community learning programmes.

The picture is changing all the time and we are happy to be able to report on the fact that an organisation providing company to isolated older people in volunteers' own houses has established a new branch in Manley and the surrounding area. This organisation, known as

Contact the Elderly, offers a once monthly tea party and provides transport to and from the host's house.

In addition the latest news is that the Parish Council has agreed to pursue registration as a 'dementia friendly community'. This will entail considering what the issues are for anyone living with dementia in the community and their carers and will explore what might be done to assist them and make everyday life in the community more manageable.

The Church

The local Church of England Church and the Chapel are strong sources of spiritual and social welfare support. Sadly the local Methodist Chapel has closed this year but great efforts are being made to ensure that those who currently worship there are enabled to join other local congregations and also benefit from the social support and opportunity offered by the local Church.

In the meantime plans are being made to redevelop the Church so that it can be used in a more flexible way, is easier to maintain and continues to draw local people in.

The Church currently offers a range of opportunities and resources to people from different age groups. Children and young people are welcomed into the Church and its activities via a series of clubs which run either weekly or monthly including one for babies and toddlers, one for children who are in Key Stage One, and those in Key Stage Two.

The first service of the month is designed with children and young people in mind and there is support and encouragement of the younger members of the Church to become involved in readings and other activities, all of which can be helpful in developing personal confidence and experience. The refreshments after the service in the form of homemade cakes have become quite a feature!

There is an annual crib service at which all local children and families are made welcome. The Church has been developing some strong links with the local school and hosts various events involving schools through the year.

The Church currently hosts the annual Rose Queen event in the village.

A monthly Sunday afternoon social event takes place, intended to offer friendship and refreshment to local older people. This has been arranged in conjunction with the Methodist Chapel and takes place in the WI Hall.

An annual Summer concert is organised with broad appeal and three times a year a charity fund raising social event occurs. Some special services take place through the year including a Light for a Life service, a Toy Service in aid of Save the Family and a Remembrance Sunday service.

The Vicar and other members of the ministry team are happy to visit people at their request who are unwell, bereaved or experiencing some other crisis in their lives.

Mention should be made of the Church Choir which is always happy to welcome new members and is well organised and much valued in the village.

Looking forward, the Church is intending to develop its response both to young people and the elderly and to further pursue its intention regarding the building and attempting to plan some physical improvements which will be to the benefit of the congregation and village and will enable the Church to play an even stronger role in the wider village community.

The School

The School has an important role to play in the Village and has been keen to welcome the community into the school. The Head and teaching staff are able to see at first-hand what the local strengths and gaps in provision for children and young people are in the village and we have drawn on that in this report. The school offers out of school experiences to local children including an annual family camp out and a Summer sports workshop. It has established good working relationships with other local providers of children's services including the local private nursery and the school hosts the Ashton Hayes 0-4s Playgroup. The school has use of a minibus and is very pleased to be able to lend it to other groups and organisations. It also encourages the booking of its hall and one classroom for community events out of school hours. The school playing field is used regularly by a local boys' football team.

Social Clubs and Organisations

There are a number of such clubs operating in the village. These include the Women's Institute, the Thursday Group, the Gardening Club, Scrabble Club, Ashton Sings Community Choir, Scouts, The 0-4s Playgroup and the Baby and Toddler group, the Football Club, Cricket Club and the Theatre Group.

Some of these are thriving whilst a few struggle to survive, whether that relates to their funding or issues relating to venues and premises. A case in point is the Scout Group whose building desperately needs replacing and who may need to move to a base in another village unless a solution can be found very soon. An additional problem they experience and one which is mirrored in other groups which provide services for children and young people is the dearth of volunteers to work with such groups.

Other

The **Community Shop** performs an unofficial but very real social function, bringing together volunteers from the locality in a common purpose and offering them and the customers a warm and friendly environment. It has become a thriving social hub within the village which is highly valued. It is sincerely hoped that in time the local Pub which has been closed for almost a year might also become a community facility offering local people somewhere comfortable and inviting so that they can socialise regardless of age or interest and during the day and evening.

The new **Playing Field and Pavilion** are similarly greatly valued and have created a sense of community pride which in turn benefits many local people, children and adults alike.

The **Parish Council** performs a role as an enabler and support, attempting to ensure that local people`s voices are heard and their needs represented. Our Parish Council has already on several occasions demonstrated a willingness to be quite radical in its thinking about opportunities available, if not to the Council directly, then to local organisations that operate with its active support. Examples to date have been AHSRA, the Community Shop, and the Carbon Energy Company.

Gaps and needs

In an attempt to identify the gaps and needs within Ashton Hayes and Horton cum Peel a series of questions have been formulated. These are included in the facilities and welfare group survey being launched on the 23rd November and are repeated here:

1. Are children and young people from babies/ toddlers through to teenagers well provided for in the village?

	1 = Not at all Well provided for										10 = Extremely well provided for									
Babies & toddlers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Children	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Teenagers & Young People	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

2. Are children and young people from babies/toddlers through to teenagers and **from families with low incomes** able to access existing services/facilities?

Low incomes	1 = No access to Existing services/facilities										10 = Extremely easy to access existing services / facilities									
Accessing existing facilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3. To what extent are you dependent on private or public transport of one form or another to access services/facilities?

	1 = Not at all dependent										10 = Extremely dependent									
Dependent on Transport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

4. When you want to spend time regularly with others and wish to access local services/facilities are you able to do so?

	1 = Not at all able										10 = Extremely able									
Spending time with others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

5. Are people of whatever age with disabilities encouraged and supported in accessing services/facilities and amenities or does the fact they live in a rural location in itself restrict them?

	1 = Not at all Encouraged/supported										10 = Extremely Encouraged/supported									
Accessing services if disabled	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10										

Potential Development and Improvement Opportunities

There are a couple of areas for consideration and others may think of additional ones in which case please do suggest them.

1. Given the number of local organisations and groups active in the local community it might be useful to consider the potential for some sort of alliance being established in order to share information, offer support and ensuring through joint arrangements an efficient use of resources.
2. The need for more opportunities and activities for young people, in particular teenagers. This will require adults to volunteer to run groups and help out.
3. An exploration of the potential for the development of community transport in the community in order to allow individuals regardless of age or disability access to opportunities in areas outside the Parish boundaries.
4. A local "freecycle" service – even a listing on the parish council website of serviceable items that are no longer wanted/needed by current owners but could be of use to someone else.
5. A local "skills directory" – so people could choose to use their local seamstress / builder / solicitor (or not!)
6. Promotion of the village website to draw together in one place all the wonderful activities and organisations that we have (where each club/group/organisation could add news etc to their own page to keep people up to date)