



Good Neighbour Schemes In Bracknell Forest Borough

Good Neighbour Schemes have been operating in the Bracknell Forest Area for many years providing an extensive network of care in the local community covering the Borough. The following guidelines will outline the work of the Schemes, exactly what they are able to do, and not do!

The Schemes are run entirely by volunteers from within the local community, and their main aim is to lend a helping hand in their local area to those who are less able, ie the elderly or infirm, or those who find difficulty in accessing public transport or are unable to fulfil day-to-day activities which most people take for granted. Services provided can vary according to individual Schemes but mainly cover transport to doctors' surgeries, hospitals, chiropodists etc, help with shopping and collecting pensions. Some Schemes also offer befriending services although this is entirely dependent on the volunteers locally.

The Scheme operates by co-ordinators taking calls and requests from clients and matching these up with a volunteer who is able to offer that particular type of assistance. It is the co-ordinator's job to identify the particular request and judge whether it comes within the remit of the Scheme. Once this is identified the co-ordinator will then look to his/her list of volunteers to see who is able to help. The co-ordinator will then call a volunteer with details of the request to see if they are available to help and then call the client back to confirm and sort out details. This vital part of the service can take many telephone calls to finally get the help needed, and if one particular Scheme can't help they will also call other neighbouring Schemes to see if they can offer assistance. It is very rare not to be able to help in some way or another. All calls are logged to provide detailed records of the requests.

The administration, finances and other business is dealt with by an elected management committee, which includes the co-ordinators, which reports regularly to the committee enabling the Scheme to monitor the number and type of requests received.

The majority of calls received are for transport to hospitals, doctors' surgeries, etc, and the Scheme does usually require 48 hours notice to arrange this with a volunteer. If a request is met the co-ordinator will inform the client of the approximate charge for mileage if applicable, ie Crowthorne Good Neighbours Scheme does not specifically charge for mileage and relies purely on donations. Expenses are paid to the volunteer to cover fuel, wear and tear, etc, in line with the Inland Revenue guidelines on payments to volunteers. Again this varies between the Schemes according to where the volunteer lives and also the distance to the various destinations.

The Schemes are publicised locally either by the use of cards delivered to homes, advertising in local publications and public places to promote the services of the Scheme and displaying the contact details. As previously mentioned each Scheme does offer different services according to what volunteers they have at that time. It is therefore vital to check with the individual scheme first before promising help or referring a potential client on to them. Some important points to remember:

- Requests for transport usually require 48 hours notice
- Volunteer drivers are unable to cater for wheelchairs as the size of the car being used obviously varies. Therefore before a client is referred to a co-ordinator it would be helpful if their mobility needs are established first. Wheelchair users should be referred to "Keep Mobile".
- Most Schemes do charge for mileage which covers the volunteer's driving expenses. The co-ordinator will advise the client of the approximate cost.
- The operators of the Scheme are purely volunteers and as such are unable to carry out certain duties ie medical, personal hygiene etc. They can also only offer general help (not transport) on a short term basis.

If you would like an up-to-date list of contact telephone numbers together with times, if applicable, for each scheme and also contact numbers of other transport groups please contact BFVA 01344 304404.

If you have any additional questions concerning the services provided please contact the appropriate Scheme.