

Committee:	Date:
Housing Management & Almshouses Sub Committee	27 April 2015
Subject:	Public
Good Neighbour Scheme Review	
Report of:	For Information
Director of Community and Children's Services	
Summary	
<p>This report provides Members with an overview and evaluation of The Good Neighbour Scheme, which has been operating on Middlesex Street and Golden Lane Estate for almost 2 years.</p> <p>The report highlights what has been accomplished over this time and identifies the next steps in the ambition to roll The Scheme out across all City of London Estates.</p> <p>Key highlights to date include increasing interest in The Scheme and individuals enjoying helping those who live close to them in a way relevant to their interests and lifestyles. The review of The Scheme gives the opportunity to work more closely with residents and providers and address current estate priorities more flexibly and in a way that is unique to the estate and individuals concerned.</p>	
Recommendation	
Members are asked to:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the report 	

Main Report

Background

1. From extensive consultation, we know that one of the things our resident's value most about their estates is that they are safe, friendly places to live. The Good Neighbour Scheme was set up by officers on Middlesex Street Estate in April 2013 to see if we could encourage people to support individuals in their community. We felt that by providing a framework and support for residents, we would make it easier for them to volunteer.
2. The Scheme recruits volunteers and matches them to vulnerable people who would like some support, or to newcomers who would appreciate a welcome. As well as promoting The Scheme, we provide guidelines, so that volunteers have clear boundaries and understand their roles, and on going staff support. Working with Community Service Volunteers we have provided training for volunteers, including safeguarding, and we also organise security checks.

3. Good Neighbours undertake a range of volunteering depending on the needs of the estate of the individuals involved. Some might focus on befriending – simply calling in to see an isolated neighbour and taking them out occasionally. Some run errands, such as fetching library books, posting letters and doing small amounts of shopping. They might introduce a newcomer of the estate to neighbours or take them to an event or estate meeting, to help them settle in. The Scheme has also encompassed a gardening group, which works on communal gardens for the benefit of residents.
4. All Good Neighbours receive Time Credits for every hour of time that they give and can spend these on a variety of local and national activities.
5. Residents of Golden Lane started some ‘buddying’ and showed interest in The Good Neighbour Scheme so officers rolled out the programme here. There has been considerable interest in The Scheme from other estates, with the long term goal to roll out The Scheme across all City of London Estates.

Current Position – Strengths of the Scheme

6. There are a core group of individuals who volunteer regularly within The Scheme. This volunteering has tended to take the form of more traditional one to one befriending and support. Members within The Scheme have enjoyed having someone to share a coffee with, getting out and about more and on-going support with day-to-day chores . Volunteers have felt that they are making a genuine difference within their community and that being a good neighbour enables help in a way that is manageable with other life commitments.

“Being a good neighbour has allowed me to put a small amount of time in and get so much out in return. It is brilliant, as I get to know a few people but feel like I am helping the whole community” – Middlesex Street Resident

7. Time Credits have been a useful tool in recognising and rewarding volunteers for the hours they put in. The gardening group on Middlesex Street who volunteer through the Good Neighbour Scheme have been looking to expand their membership and feel credits will incentivise people from a variety of backgrounds to get involved. Time Credits have enabled The Scheme to expand quite organically. For example, the Gardening Group plan to use Time Credits to thank a resident for taking photographs as marketing materials for the City in Bloom competition.
8. Officers receive enquiries quite regularly from residents across City of London Estates looking to become involved in The Good Neighbour Scheme. This is because the model is local and people are keen to do something on their estates with those that live around them. The Scheme is unique, built on trust and does operate within a different framework to other befriending schemes.
9. Staff have been vital to the success of the scheme. Having a central point of contact on estates that are knowledgeable about the people who live there

has enabled 'good neighbours' to be matched more easily and with people they trust.

Current Position - Areas for Improvement

10. Evaluations of The Good Neighbour Scheme have come back with one consistent theme for improvement. That is that there are lots of people wanting to volunteer but less willing to ask for help and support. This is natural and happens within schemes like this across the board. Therefore the model needs to be built less on corporation staff and their matching skills and more on individuals who have trust in the community and are able to communicate with vulnerable residents in a way that officers cannot.
11. Residents would like 'good neighbourliness' and the model to be flexible. One of the barriers for people becoming involved has been the rigorous process that needs to be followed. DBS checks have at times been taking over 8 weeks to come back so people lose interest or move onto other volunteering projects. Whilst we do need to have a process in place that provides checks, not all 'good neighbour' activities need to involve this. There have been talks on estates about event days or tidy up days; these can happen more organically and have less rigid checks as people are working in groups. A scheme that can incorporate more groups will allow residents to co-productively identify problems, find solutions and address them. We can also signpost individuals who want to befriend into a different activity whilst they are waiting for checks, therefore becoming less likely to lose them.
12. We have the opportunity to work closely with partners. Housing can work more collaboratively with programmes like Peer Support through the Care Act or Age UK's City Smart intergenerational IT project and support volunteering options currently high on the agenda. By dual badging these volunteering opportunities the scheme will have more variety for resident involvement. It allows scheme flexibility and for volunteering to evolve with the changing culture of estate priorities over time.
13. Residents have ideas and concepts that can be included within The Good Neighbour Scheme. The window replacement project on Great Arthur House is a great example of this. Residents would like to support each other to let Keepmoat in to properties when individuals are not in or to help neighbours with the moving of furniture that is needed. This is a complete one off but through the vehicle of The Good Neighbour Scheme can make such an impact to those volunteering and those having the support. It builds for strong relationships within the block, trust and people being more likely to ask for help in the future if needed.

Next Steps

14. The first step will be to refine and relaunch The Good Neighbour Scheme model on Middlesex Street and Golden Lane. This will incorporate the improvements outlined and also ask people to give further ideas for the development of The Scheme on their estates. Work will continue with current members and partners to seek out new opportunities.

15. Sustainability of the new model will rely heavily on having a dedicated officer on each estate trained and supported to empower residents to develop their ideas. Officer time going forward will be less about filling in paperwork and matching skills and more about signposting into different Good Neighbour Scheme options, giving individuals choice. To support with more individuals likely to be asking for help on their estates we can use Time Credits to reward those who champion the scheme and tell others about it. For example, being a block representative who chats with others in their immediate area, updates noticeboards and keeps people in the loop. Some may also want to help with basic administration and learn new skills through doing so.
16. We need to review where we have our DBS checks carried out so we are comfortable with the timescales involved. Community Service Volunteers can no longer carry these out for us so this is an opportunity to make our processes streamlined and as consistent as possible.
17. We will do further evaluation of The Scheme, particularly around social isolation and the link with housing, health and social care, with the view to roll the model out across all City of London Estates.

Appendices

- None

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