

# Somerset Village Agents

## PRESS RELEASE



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*Theme – Tackling and reducing loneliness across Rural Somerset*

### Join in the Christmas Festivities across Rural Somerset

Village Agents for the Community Council for Somerset (CCS) are ensuring that loneliness and isolation are being minimised across Somerset this winter.

In the lead up to Christmas, Village Agents (VA's) are focussing on loneliness and being able to join in. Supporting vulnerable people in their communities, loneliness is an issue they frequently encounter, often speaking to people who find themselves isolated or unable to have regular contact with other people. They are helping people feel less isolated and more involved in their community, encouraging people to get involved in interesting local activities.

To support this, the VA's have created something unique for Somerset – event listings for rural Somerset, with lots of opportunities for everyone, but especially helpful to those who may find themselves alone over Christmas.

Keeley Rudd, CEO for the Community Council for Somerset said:

"It's truly humbling to see so many wonderful events going on across Somerset – from volunteers spending their Christmas day cooking for others to ensure they are not on their own over the festive period, to Carol Singing and Christmas Bingos and Quizzes – there is so much choice, there really is something for everyone!"

CCS's Village Agents can support people to find transport solutions to access events in their areas, which can be such a barrier in rural communities. They are excellent at providing the vital bridge between individuals and the services they need to access, from helping with their Doctors appointments, to allocating Winter Fuel grants.

People across Somerset are finding the VA's work vital, client's feedback showing just how important they are:

"Thanks again for all your help. I do feel a little more hopeful now. Before I met you I was beginning to feel a little discouraged and worried about my whole situation but now, hopefully, things will start to move forward"

"Enormously cheering and supportive it is like having a return to the traditional family doctor who knew and understood the whole situation within each home"

"The service is has opened up a lifeline for myself and my husband, cutting through the tape to get access to help desperately needed"

"At last someone who I felt was truly listening and who was recognising and taking into account all my needs"

"You've been an absolute Godsend to me and my sister. You really have made our lives easier. It's great knowing there's somewhere we can go when we don't know where to turn."

Christmas listings for Mendip, Sedgemoor, West & South Somerset and Taunton Deane can be found here <http://somersestrcc.org.uk/somerset-village-agents-project/>.

This Christmas if you are lonely and would like someone to talk to or information on local organisations that can help - visit Somerset Choices: [www.somersetchoices.org.uk](http://www.somersetchoices.org.uk) and search 'loneliness'.

Keep up to date with CCS news – find us on Facebook & Twitter @RuralSomerset

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Editors notes:

The Somerset Village Agent project is a project of CCS and now covers half of the county. The Village Agent project continues to grow from strength to strength. The team has better geographical coverage, reaching even more people and providing support in ways appropriate to local people. The project uses paid, part time, highly trained individuals living in the parish 'clusters' they support. They help to bridge the gap between isolated, excluded, vulnerable and lonely individuals and statutory and/or voluntary organisations which offer specific solutions to identified needs.

Village Agents offer a signposting and referral service with a difference.

Village Agents work with all ages dealing with a wide variety of issues, although a considerable number of their clients are elderly and involves social care issues. Helping to solve these problems may, ultimately, help the elderly to remain living independently for longer. Village Agents also have the role of helping to shape services by feeding back to the appropriate body information about gaps in service e.g. transport provision. They can also motivate and support a community to respond to a local need by working together to address issues e.g. by helping them to set up a coffee morning for a group of lonely people or start a volunteer car scheme.

CCS supports people who live and work in Somerset communities. We do this through a range of diverse projects which bring together people who care about local community life in Somerset. We focus our energy on helping you and your community.

See [our work](#) to see what projects are running across Somerset.