

BACKGROUND

Age Concern Colchester and North East Essex is a charity working to improve the lives of those in later years by enhancing their health and wellbeing across **Colchester, Witham and Tendring**. This area has a growing population with Tendring District being identified as one of the 10 most deprived in England.



Our aim is to **enable those in later years, and their family carers, to manage the challenges of ageing so they can live life well**. We work to **improve and maintain health and well-being** by providing a **range of services**. These enable people to **retain choice and control over their lives whilst living independently in their own homes**. We look holistically at the individual and all the components around their health and wellbeing, then seek to either resolve things on first contact or ensure that the first referral point is a resolve.

Nationally, those in later years with care needs are projected to increase by **63% over the next 20 years**. Across Essex the population of people aged over 65 years is increasing from 20%. **Tendring** has the highest proportion of over 65s to their population in the whole county at **29.5%**. This is set to **rise to 33%** over the next **15 years**.

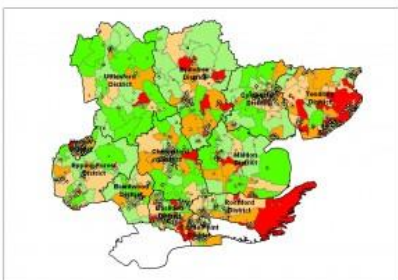
Currently there are an estimated **82,464 people aged 65+** living in Colchester, Tendring and Witham (ONS 2019); this is forecast to rise by an average of **17.83% by 2035**.

The greatest risk to health and well-being is **loneliness and social isolation**. Living alone, because a partner has died, is the single greatest cause of social isolation. 35% of people in later years live alone and this increases to a half in those aged 75 and over. According to ONS estimations, by 2035 the number of people aged **75+ in our area will have doubled**.

Combating loneliness and social isolation, with its associated conditions of **poverty** and **depression**, is central to everything we do.



THE NEED – To combat loneliness and poverty in Colchester and North East Essex



1.9 million people in later years, living in the **UK** often feel **ignored or invisible**. In Essex, we know that around 10% of people aged 65+ say that they **'feel lonely all or most of the time.'** (*Campaign to end Loneliness, Essex County Council*) So, for **one in ten** people in later years across the county, **loneliness is their daily reality**.

One in five of people aged 75+ are living below the poverty line and that older pensioners' incomes are on average, **£59 per week lower** than younger pensioners (*Independent Age Report May 2016: The overlooked over 75s: Poverty among the 'Silent Generation' who lived through the second world war.*)

With Colchester, Witham and Tendring estimating increases in their populations of those aged 65+ we estimate a target beneficiary audience of approximately **12,700** people aged 60 who need our support.

Research also shows that loneliness:

- is worse for your health than smoking 15 cigarettes daily or being obese
- increases the risks of developing heart disease, stroke, cognitive decline and depression (*Valtorta et al 2016*)
- gives a 64% chance of developing dementia (*Holwerda et al 2015*)
- increases risk of dying by 26% (*Holt-Lunstad 2015*)

WHAT IS AGE CONCERN COLCHESTER AND NORTH EAST ESSEX DOING ABOUT THIS?

To address the issues associated with social isolation and loneliness, we can highlight:

'Two of the things we do to help those in later years is to give them the advice – staff know what benefits people are due, where they can find help and advice, and where they can even find trusted traders. The second is befriending; we get volunteers who are befrienders to go out and meet up with older people.'

Anne Reeves. Trustee

Our work in **Welfare, Advice and Information** enables clients with poor health and/or low incomes to secure **additional entitlements** in addition to access to blue badge parking permits, **which mean people with mobility difficulties can maintain independence and social connectedness.**

- **89% of clients report improvement in well-being**, following our support.
- In 2019-20 our **Information service** answered over **7,200** queries during the year, covering: benefits, non-residential care, health and disability, housing, legal and consumer matters.
- Additionally, the **Welfare, Advice and Information service** supported a total of **893 service-users** (over **650 supported in their own homes**) with claims releasing **£1.6m in 2019/20, an increase from £1.3m in 2018/19 and £875,000 in 2017/18.** These came from Disability Living Allowances, Attendance Allowance, Personal Independence Payments, Pension Credit and Housing Benefit.
- **25%** of these clients were advised on other **non-financial matters** including: rehousing, ensuring the right care options are in place, improving mobility and healthcare referrals.
- We **extended our geographical reach** to meet the needs of clients within the Tendring District, an area identified as within the **10% most deprived in England** which incorporates **Jaywick, the most deprived ward in England.** With a significant older demographic, the impact of deprivation is equally significant.
- Through the period of **Covid-19**, we have evolved our Advice Service towards **telephone** and **digital support** following the temporary suspension of face-to-face services, enabling people to access all the above allowances as well as assistance with choices regarding their current and future health care options.
- We are developing a **directory** of DBS-checked and approved services for people in later years.

In this same year:

- We matched **186** people in later years who were lonely and socially isolated with a **befriender.**
- Of these, we supported **22** people to end-of-life by working with St Helena Hospice and CVS Tendring on a Test and Learn project, through which we develop trained volunteers in end-of-life support as **'Compassionate Companions.'** They take the place of family members and sit with individuals who have no-one to support them at their end of life because no-one should have no-one.
- The total number of people in later years who are receiving/have received **befriending support** is growing, reaching a cumulative total of **289** clients in the first 5 months of 2020 with **74** matches in process.
- With one in sixteen people over 65 and one in six people over 85 living with dementia, we support a significant number of befriendees who have a dementia diagnosis.
- The work we do in the community develops better awareness through the Dementia Action Alliance, and is based on **prevent, react, and support**, getting surgeries accredited and delivering 6-week courses **'Tips & Tools for Supporting People with Dementia.'**

Transforming local lives with Welfare Advice and Information, and Befriending

So often, those in later years do not know what is available for them, but when they get advice, it can be transformative for their health, well-being and feeling of social connection, enabling them to remain living independently. Timely, and accurate information can also prevent the need for more intensive help from local Health or Social Care Services.

Our range of **Welfare, Advice and Information** gives valuable, impartial information about local services which focuses on financial hardship; housing; bereavement; changes in physical health; mental well-being; care responsibilities and retirement. One beneficiary, **George**, from Colchester comments in response to information and

advice he received from **Age Concern Colchester and North East Essex** at a critical time for him. He sums up *how* what we do transforms lives:

“I experienced a really difficult time in my life when Pat met me and took all the anxiety of the situation away. There were many benefits that I didn’t even realise I was entitled to and I now have a much better quality of life as a result. Pat also put me in touch with the befriending team and they have found me someone to visit on a weekly basis. I am so grateful for the help that the Age Concern team has provided.”



Befriending is about building a **friendship** between a volunteer befriender and someone in later years which encourages the person befriended to talk freely and confidently and feel that someone cares about them. There is a two-way beneficiary dynamic as the volunteer/client match is made based on their interests and experiences.

Regular befriending often uncovers other needs, such as welfare; access to trusted providers; bereavement support through our trained Bereavement Befrienders; social activities in the area or at *The Veranda* - our social hub; or person-centred dementia support to those in later years and their family-carers, all of which can be met once referred to the relevant service.

One of our clients in later years who has an **Age Concern Colchester and North East Essex** befriender tells us:

‘Kath has brightened up my life. I look forward to talking to her - someone female who makes me smile and makes me feel special. We talk three times a week and Kath also does shopping and errands for me as well. It feels like I have gained a daughter. Thank you for finding her for me.’

Kath feels much the same: ***‘I am so happy I got to meet Elaine and I hope this will be a friendship for a long time to come. Our friendship enriches my life just as much as it does hers.’***

SO, WHO CAN HELP US TO HELP THEM? YOU CAN, HERE’S HOW...

This year it will cost **£96,579.04** to maintain our **Information and Welfare Advice and Information Service** and **£176,874.84** to maintain our **Befriending service** (see below) **The funding we seek from you is to help us maintain and develop these services to meet increasing need:**

Welfare, Advice and Information running costs	Totals
Staff salaries, NI and pensions	£84,719.04
Staff travel and expenses	£ 2,700.00
Technology and Telephony	£ 2,340.00
General office costs	£ 1,800.00
Rent and Rates	£ 3,940.00
Management services (human resources, training, supervision, premises, insurance, utilities)	£ 1,080.00
Total cost	£96,579.04

Befriending and Dementia running costs	Totals
Staff salaries, NI and pensions	£159,464.84
Staff travel and expenses	£ 3,240.00
Technology & Telephony	£ 5,733.75
General office costs	£ 3,995.00
Rent and Rates	£ 2,821.25
Management services (human resources, training, supervision, premises, insurance, utilities)	£ 1,620.00
Total cost	£176,874.84

“Whether it is the Trustees or whether it is the volunteers or the staff, we are all aiming to do the same thing. However, no engine can run without oil, and money is needed to keep the cogs running. I think that we have seen from the funders we have had, that they have seen ample evidence of the willingness of volunteers and staff alike to actually put their shoulders behind the wheel and do a fantastic job for the older people of Colchester. They should back that and feel good that they’ve been able to do so and know that their money is not wasted.”

Colin Bennett, Property Trustee