

If you're reading this, you have very likely taken on the job of being the Welfare Coordinator for your Street Association. If so, you have arguably taken on the most rewarding role there is in the Association.

The reason for this is that the ultimate purpose of a Street Association is to help people - and you have the privilege of finding out who needs help and encouraging others to do something about it.

The chief qualifications for the job: that you genuinely care, that you enjoy people; and that you can get others moving to do something about the needs in their street.

The more time you can devote to this, the better. You would probably need to be able to offer an evening a week (or equivalent) at the minimum.

Visiting homes

Our strong recommendation is that you visit every home in your Street Association in not more than one year (that would be just over one a week, but if you can do it faster, so much the better). The people you visit will know about the Street Association, even if they haven't yet turned up to anything. So the starting point is to introduce yourself as the new Welfare Coordinator, whose job is to help make the street a happier place.

The first question is: "What could you do to help someone else in this street?" Attached is a 'check-list' of the kind of help that people might be able to offer. There will be more things to offer, but you get the idea! Make a careful note of what people say, using the Welfare Coordinator's check-list (attached), because otherwise you will forget or mix things up, especially as you start talking to many different people. When you organize for help to be given, also note down who was asked to do this.

The reason we urge you first to ask what they could offer someone else (rather than starting with "do you have any needs") is that people will actually feel freer to talk about their own needs if they first talk about what they could do for someone else. That way, it feels less like 'charity' (i.e., less embarrassing to be asking for help) and more like a system where we all help one-another. That way, there's no 'stigma' about admitting one has needs.

The second question to ask is "do you have any needs?" Having gone over the above list in relation to what they could offer, it'll be easier to look at the same list in relation to what they might need.

Your role is, however, not just about listening to what they say – it is also about what you notice. For example, you might notice that there are some things in the house that need looking after (even though they didn't say anything); you might notice that they are simply lonely and want to keep talking for that reason. So, you can come to your own conclusions and then see what can be done for them.

Remember, a lot of people have needs, but “don’t want to impose”. So they will welcome it when an outsider (you!) organizes something for them that meets the need, even though they might never ask for it themselves. You might need to ask them specifically whether (for example) they would appreciate some help with shopping/the lawn/DIY etc.

Remember also that sometimes the best thing you can do for someone is to ‘take them out of themselves’, by potentially giving them someone else to look after. And of course that helps the other person too. It brings a win/win situation where the person who is asked to help rises to the challenge, finds that they have much to give, that it is appreciated and that it makes them feel much better about themselves. Meanwhile, the person receiving the help also feels cared for, valued and the help itself is of great practical benefit.

On the other hand, don’t try and force anyone to give or receive help! “I’m OK, thanks” is a perfectly acceptable answer to your questions. This is for those that want it.

One thing you might take note of is: who on the street has been recently bereaved? One Street Association set up a group for recently bereaved people, who meet every week and encourage and support each other.

Matching needs and offers of help

This is where you need to use your instincts and common sense. Some people needing help might be quite vulnerable and so you need to have your wits about you to make sure that you are not sending them someone who could cause problems.

There are four safeguards here:

1. You don’t have to accept all offers (“thanks so much; we’ll let you know if there’s anyone who needs that”). If you feel uneasy, go with that instinct and keep the offer of help ‘on the shelf’.
2. When help has been given to a vulnerable person, check with the recipient afterwards if they were happy with the person helping them.
3. For really sensitive positions, it is important to ask the person offering help to get themselves DBS-checked (saying “so sorry, it’s the procedure”). They can do this by going onto www.ddc.uk.net.
4. You can also send people in twos, which in itself is a safeguard to all concerned.

We don’t want to go over-the-top on caution, but we do need to exercise care. The second safeguard (asking the recipient if they were happy) is of key importance, so that a difficult situation doesn’t get repeated. That way, you also find out if the help offered was (for one reason or another) not actually given. We also want to protect you from any come-back from having matched a need with an offer of help. Please leave the member’s copy of the attached check-list with the person you visit, not least because it carries a disclaimer, to protect you.

The other thing is to match offers and needs as you go along, without waiting until you have dozens of each and it all gets too much! Much of the time, as you see

someone who has a need, you will already be thinking of the person who could help them, and who would be a blessing to them.

You also might be hearing from other members of your Street Association core group about neighbours known to them who have needs. You might want to put those people high up on your visiting list.

Finally, as you meet people, you will have an opportunity to rope them in to the wider activities of the Street Association. This in itself will often be a spur to their 'welfare', as a lot of the difficulties many people have spring from isolation. Getting involved allows people both to give and receive, helping to put them in a much better frame of mind in the process.

Thanks!

Many thanks for undertaking this important role. It will cost you something (in time, energy, emotional commitment), but we believe it will make a very big difference to a large number of people's lives – and yours, too, we hope, very much for the better! This is genuinely worthwhile.

Check-list (member's copy)

I feel that I could:

- Go alongside a troubled teenager and offer mentoring
- Help an elderly or disabled person, or a single parent, with shopping
- Do a bit of DIY for someone who can't do it for themselves
- Do gardening for an elderly or disabled person
- Do some decorating for someone who needs the help
- Offer transport to someone who needs it (e.g. a lift to hospital)
- Take an elderly or disabled person for an outing somewhere nice
- Do English conversation with an immigrant
- Help someone who's not too good with computers!
- Give a carer a bit of respite by taking over for a couple of hours
- Teach someone a particular skill you may have (e.g. language, craft, sport, DIY, mathematics tuition, etc.)
- Visit someone who's lonely
- Offer to pray for/with someone who would like that

Disclaimer

Please note that all relationships in the Street Association are, like any relationships, entered into at each individual's own risk and that neither the officers of the Street Association, nor the Association itself, can be held responsible for the outcome.

Check-list (Welfare Coordinator's copy)

Name _____ (male / female)

House number _____

Age (approx!) _____

Date visited _____

The above person felt he/she could:

- Go alongside a troubled teenager and offer mentoring
- Help an elderly or disabled person, or a single parent, with shopping
- Do a bit of DIY for someone who can't do it for themselves
- Do gardening for an elderly or disabled person
- Do some decorating for someone who needs the help
- Offer transport to someone who needs it (e.g. a trip to hospital)
- Take an elderly or disabled person for an outing somewhere nice
- Do English conversation with an immigrant
- Help someone who's not too good with computers!

- Give a carer a bit of respite by taking over for a couple of hours
- Teach someone a particular skill you may have (e.g. language, craft, sport, DIY, mathematics tuition, etc.)
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Notes:

Action (who is asked to help with what):