

Case Study - Charleville McAuley Day Care Centre Care & Repair

Introduction

A community activist in Charleville, Co. Cork, became aware that there was a need for a free/low cost small repairs and visitation service for the older community members to help them live more comfortably and safely. Having a background in the building trade himself and being semi-retired, he was also conscious that with the downturn in the economy, there may be a number of skilled tradespersons with time on their hands and also volunteers in the community who were willing to get involved.

Census 2006 figures for Charleville showed that there was a potential of almost 600 no. clients over 65 years of age who could benefit from such a service.

Persons by sex, age and marital status, 60+ Age Group, Charleville, Co. Cork, Census 2006												
Age	Male Total	Male Single	Male Married	Male Separated	Male Divorced	Male Widowed	Female Total	Female Single	Female Married	Female Separated	Female Divorced	Female Widowed
60-64	66	14	44	5	1	2	69	12	40	3	1	13
65-69	65	13	44	0	3	5	68	8	38	1	2	19
70-74	62	12	43	0	1	6	66	10	29	3	1	23
75-79	37	11	22	2	0	2	46	7	14	1	1	23
80-84	22	7	5	0	0	10	49	14	6	0	0	29
85+	17	4	5	0	0	8	28	12	1	0	0	15
TOTAL 65+ AGE GROUP	269	61	163	7	5	33	326	63	128	8	5	122
Total Pop. Charleville	1526	874	538	39	31	44	1458	734	498	58	20	148

The Census figures also showed that 147 no persons over 65 years of age as having a disability in Charleville.

Persons with a disability by age group, 65+ Age Group, Charleville, Co. Cork, Census 2006.	
65 years and over	Total Pop Charleville with a disability
147	319

Activities

Kevin McSweeney brought his idea to the community development officer at the Charleville Outreach office of Ballyhoura Development Ltd. Kevin had identified a core group of skilled trades persons who had some spare time on their hands and would be willing to help out, and had

identified geographic areas within the community with higher densities of older persons residing there.

With the assistance of staff members of Ballyhoura Development (community and enterprise), Mr. McSweeney was supported to identify what model would best suit the roll out of a visitation and small repairs project, from similar service demarcation, to client identification, to stakeholder buy-in, to operations and roll-out of the service. From these early meetings, it was soon identified that should a service be put in place, it would need the support and backing of other agencies to reach its full potential.

One such support agency identified was Age Action Ireland, one of Ireland's leading charity and advocacy bodies for older people, which works against issues of discrimination, helps to promote positive ageing and to aims to improve policies and services for all older people. Age Action Ireland's Care and Repair Programme was set up on a pilot basis in November 2006 to assist older people to carry out necessary small repairs and improvements to their homes, enabling them to live independently in the community in increased comfort and safety. The service is currently available in Dublin, Cork, Galway and Limerick cities and over twenty locations across Ireland. The vision of the Age Action Care and Repair Programme is to enable older and vulnerable people to remain in their own homes, in their own communities, living as independently as possible, through the improvement of their housing conditions and their level of comfort and security.

Following initial enquiries to Age Action Ireland, exploratory meetings were arranged between that agency, Mr McSweeney's local volunteer steering group and Ballyhoura Development to gain a better understanding of the "Care & Repair" model and to identify a way forward. From these initial meetings, it was agreed that this model would be suitable for the needs in Charleville.

Public meetings were then held in Charleville by the Steering Group, supported by Age Action Ireland and Ballyhoura Development, to outline the model and service to the stakeholders, including potential clients and volunteers, and other agencies. Once agreement had been reached that the Age Action Ireland Care & Repair model was the way forward, a franchise agreement was signed by Charleville's McAuley Day Care Centre as the anchor group and the local Steering Group became the group/committee which would be responsible for the day to day roll-out of the operation.

Ballyhoura Development assisted with putting a project workplan in place which included elements of operations, promotion, referrals, recording and monitoring. Fifteen volunteers (whose interests, availability and skills were logged in a database) undertook induction training provided by Age Action Ireland covering issues such as best practice engagement with clients, scope of service, awareness of issues affecting older persons, such as general health and well being, security etc.

An awareness raising and promotion plan was identified to target older persons and the wider community, e.g. fliers, press releases, posters etc, and meetings were arranged with other stakeholders such as local doctors, public health nurses, postal service to outline the remit of the services provided.

A credit union account in the name of the project with clear rules on account control was also established and a 12 month community fundraising plan with agreed events (church gate collection, flag day etc) was defined by the Steering Group.

Age Action Ireland assisted with the development and design of the range of recording and referral documentation to be used at the project "base". This base is at the Charleville Outreach office of Ballyhoura Development. Administrative support is provided through two Community Support Workers attached to the local FAS CE Scheme, who availed of training from Age Action Ireland. Ballyhoura Development provides a telephone number, 063-30535, which is used by clients and the public to log a job or gain more information on the project.

Through the Local and Community Development Programme, Ballyhoura Development supported the group to arrange the necessary insurances and indemnities to cover the activities of the project.

The Charleville McAuley Day Care Centre Care and Repair service was officially launched on 1st October 2010 offering two main services to those community members over 65 years of age; (1.) Repair: local volunteers carry out small repairs and other low-level maintenance jobs in the homes and gardens of people, and (2.) Care: home visiting or befriending of a client by local volunteers to provide social contact to older people who are at risk of isolation in their own homes.

Lessons Learned

At the outset, the community development worker found it useful to work with the client (and consequently the Steering Group) who was proposing the project to examine other services provided locally and to identify possible gaps were in service provision. It also afforded the opportunity for service providers, such as general practitioners, public health nurses and Gardaí, to become familiar with the personnel involved in the planned project. These stakeholders also supported the project by circulating flyers and press releases throughout the Charleville area.

Operationally, tasks and client details are recorded by Community Support Workers and referred to the lead volunteer, who will identify two suitable volunteers for the job. The client is then contacted to confirm the best time to call to complete the service. A Job Completion sheet is returned to the project base once completed to enable Age Action Ireland to monitor numbers and provide ongoing support and training, if required.

The identification of a base of volunteers with skills to offer and time available to provide services were also very important. There are currently 15 volunteers active in the project and it was felt that this was sufficient in the early stage to ensure that all volunteers were involved quickly in client call outs to ensure continued interest.

Administrative support for the project through Community Support Workers of the local FÁS CE Scheme, and a base at the Ballyhoura Development Ltd offices in Charleville, enables a constant presence and ongoing support for clients, volunteers and Steering Group members.

Advice and guidance from Ballyhoura Development Ltd, as well as funding sourced through the Local and Community Development Programme, ensured that the project had adequate supports in place to deliver a comprehensive package to its client base in the Charleville community.

Success

Charleville McAuley Day Care Centre Care & Repair held its first AGM on 17th October 2011. The project's Chairperson reported that it has a very successful first year of operation. The project, based on the Age Action model operated nationally, now consists of four different services; (1) Small Repairs, (2) Visitation, (3) Trades Referral, and (4) Quote Check.

To date, 76 no. clients have used the free service. Of these, 9 no. are regular clients with various small tasks for completion and 17 no. are regular daily/weekly visitations. The total number of jobs for the first year was 769, making it one of the busiest Care & Repair services in the country.

The project has retained its volunteer base though a waiting list is held of potential candidates if and when the need arises, and Age Action Ireland will provide induction training and Garda Clearance on behalf of the local project.

Solid relationships and partnerships have developed, in particular, with the local Community Garda and Charleville Neighbourhood Watch in relation to household security and monitored alarms. Personal Information Packs (PIPs) have also been sourced through a local pharmacy and distributed to existing and potential clients of the service, giving the committee member a tangible "introduction" with clients.

The Steering Group are now looking at availing of basic IT training through the Rural Development Programme, for its clients and volunteers to further develop models of social interaction.

Conclusion

Many older people can live and work independently in their own homes, but they reach a stage of their lives where some tasks are becoming more difficult. For some, climbing on a ladder to put up a light bulb, tightening a leaking tap or fix a curtain rail may be too difficult. For others, a regular check in is enough to give them the comfort and peace of mind to enable them to continue living safely within their community.

Volunteers of this service are happy to provide helping hands to carry out these small jobs and conduct regular visits. Although it may seem like a very small thing in the scale of difficulties in society today, it can make all the difference to the life of an older person.

Charleville McAuley Day Care Centre Care & Repair complements other social inclusion work being done locally and has provided local volunteers, through simple means and locally developed partnerships, the opportunity to combat isolation and make vulnerable citizens feel safer and more secure in their own homes.