



SIX MONTH EVALUATION OF THE FIRST CONTACT SIGNPOSTING SCHEME EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (Nov 05 – May 06)

The First Contact Signposting Scheme launched in November 2005 is a multi agency checklist enabling staff, volunteers and older people to access a range of preventative services through a single gateway. A simple checklist enables access to services which enhance independence and improve well being. The first organisation to make contact with the older person completes the checklist to identify services that are needed.

Referrals go to one central point of contact where referrals are automatically generated to an appropriate organisation. This is an innovative scheme providing a holistic service to older people to access advice, information and services through one single contact with voluntary and statutory services joining together to provide an integrated and seamless service where barriers are broken down. Our aim is to identify and co-ordinate services that promote independence, health and well being and are appropriate, effective and value for money. Since the launch a total of 265 checklists have been completed resulting in 515 referrals to our partner organisations who include:- Rushcliffe Council for Voluntary Service, Nott's Fire and Rescue Service, Nottinghamshire Social Services, The Pension Service, Rushcliffe Homes, Greater Nottingham Healthy Housing, Nottinghamshire Police, Welfare Rights, South Nottingham Home Improvement Agency, Rushcliffe Voluntary Transport Scheme, Rushcliffe Borough Council, Rushcliffe 50+ Forum, Rushcliffe Asian Community Association, East Midlands Ambulance Service, Nottinghamshire Rural Community Council, and Nott's Connect. Older people have been central to the scheme and have been involved in its design, delivery and review.

Christine Dodd a member of the Rushcliffe 50+ Forum and an active member of the First Contact Steering Group said "I am very impressed. A lot of older people sit at home and don't realise there's a team to back you up. I think that First Contact is simple and excellent".

A recent survey (see appendix B) carried out with older people who had completed the checklist was extremely positive and fully endorsed the benefits of the scheme. All clients felt that their overall quality of life had been enhanced leading to feelings of wellbeing and independence and they said they were now more aware of services available. Our partners told us of the vast benefits to working with FC which has enabled them to meet targets and increase the number of people they are able to support, especially those who they would not normally have been able to make contact with.

If you would like any further information please contact:-

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SIX MONTH EVALUATION OF FIRST CONTACT

1st November 2005 – 31st May 2006

Where did the idea of First Contact evolve from?

In 2003 the County Council undertook a Best Value Review, Promotion of Independence of Older People. The review consulted with local older people and priority areas identified included improving access to information about existing services and to promote new services. Recommendation 11 of the review recommends 'a first contact checklist or common assessment tool is developed for front line staff, volunteers and others'. The County Council joined forces with the Fire and Rescue Service to pilot a scheme in Rushcliffe.

Who is it aimed at and how did you find out needs of target group?

It is aimed at anyone 60 years old or over and living in the Rushcliffe area. In consultation with older people they told us they would like better access to information about services, new developments and to enhanced advice on benefit entitlement. A stakeholder group under the umbrella of the Local Strategic Partnership was formed which identified the range of needs the checklist would include. This group was made up of statutory and voluntary organisations already working with older people and local older people themselves.

How are needs assessed?

When a person from a partner agency, such as a fire fighter Police Officer or volunteer, goes into a property they complete a simple checklist to find out if the older person has any particular needs such as pension advice, repairs and adaptations or home security. This information is then fed back to one central number at the County Council's Contact Service who will then make the necessary referrals to the relevant agencies.

Quote

"It is beneficial for us being involved in a high-profile project"
Sally Garlick Greater Nottingham Healthy Housing"

Aims and Objectives

- To enable older people living within the Rushcliffe area to access low level preventative services to help them to remain safe and independent in their own homes
- To improve access to advice, information and services which enables choice and control for the older person and that are appropriate, reflective and value for money
- To provide a streamlined service within the home where, by talking to just one professional, an older person can access services which they may not have been aware of or may not have known how to contact
- To reach across different communities including rural areas and BME groups, thus providing an equality of service to all
- To reduce the risk of accidents within the home and reduce hospital admission
- To identify gaps in services
- To facilitate partnership working within the statutory and voluntary sector widening the knowledge of local community initiatives
- Facilitate joint working with partners to avoid duplication of services, time and effort
- To determine the issues affecting older people and ways of reducing the impact of these issues
- To include older people in the decision making and influencing of the project

What have been the potential barriers?

- Partner agencies not having the capacity to deal with an increased number of referrals or the resources to meet those needs
- Contact centre computer system 'Goldmine' not being able to deal with the changing demands of First Contact. Time delays in the Contact Centre using external organisations to do changes to the system as Contact Centre staff not able to amend themselves
- Difficulties for front line staff to navigate and access services on behalf of older people due to lack of awareness, time and capacity
- Challenging organisational culture to take a more holistic and pro active approach to meeting the needs and aspirations of older people
- Mistrust of older people to answer certain questions because of fear of consequences i.e. falling means going into care
- Time restrictions of one part time co-ordinator

Who has funded and managed the scheme?

Nottinghamshire County Council and Nott's Fire and Rescue Service have funded the scheme
Rushcliffe Council for Voluntary Service provide support and management
All partners provide resources, services and time

Who are the partners?

The Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, Rushcliffe CVS, Rushcliffe Borough Council, Welfare Rights, Rushcliffe Primary Care Trust, Nottinghamshire County Council Social Services, Nottinghamshire Police, The Pensions Service, Welfare Rights, Rushcliffe Homes, South Nottinghamshire Home Improvements Agency, Greater Nottingham Healthy Housing, Rushcliffe Older Peoples' Forum, East Midlands Ambulance Service, Rushcliffe Asian Community Association, Nott's Rural Community Council

How are partners being supported?

- The scheme co-ordinator provides day to day support for the project and is in contact with co-ordinators via telephone, e-mail, liaison and steering group meetings
- Training is provided for staff via group training as well as one-to-one training as required.
- Statistics are provided by Nott's Connect with information on client figures, services provided and referrals made
- A quarterly newsletter giving information and up-dates on FC
- Partners are supported by FC to build links with other organisations providing a bridge to link those services
- Joint working enables partners to be more aware of the services each organisation has to offer and who they can link into each other to avoid duplication saving valuable time and resources
- Nott's Connect deals with all referrals and queries enabling partners to refer clients knowing that they will be dealt with quickly and efficiently

How has the scheme been evaluated during the first six months?

- Evaluative figures and statistics provided by the central point of contact, Nott's Connect on a quarterly basis (see Appendix A)
- The co-ordinator supported by Nott's Connect continually checks figures and statistics to ensure that targets are being met. We continually assess the needs and barriers of the partners, dealing with problems and checking that partners continue to use the checklist effectively
- A client survey has been carried out to obtain a service user perspective on the scheme (contact Julie Folkett for more information or a copy of the survey)
- Steering Group meetings enable each partner agency to discuss issues and share good practice

Training needs – have these been met?

- 4 training days were carried out to all partner agencies before the launch of FC in November 2005. Since then a further 4 group training days have been carried out, as well as individual training, resulting in over 200 people being able to use the checklist and have awareness of the services offered. Bev Pearson from *The Local Pension Service* said “*Staff attending the training have received a greater insight into what partners actually provide.*”
- The co-ordinator carries out training on a one-to-one basis for new staff and to up-date existing staff
- Information on services offered by First Contact and its partners is included in an information booklet and leaflet
- A newsletter offers up-to-date information to partners
- Through training and the steering group partnership co-ordinators are able to offer day-to-day support to staff

How have ‘pathway’ organisations benefited and what has been achieved?

A questionnaire completed by partners confirmed that they have benefited from their involvement with FC. The majority of pathways reported that, through working with FC, they had gained an increased awareness of the needs of older people and the services available enabling them to review, revise and identify demand informing future planning.

- Housing options have produced a user friendly information leaflet giving details of their service. *Rebecca Clayton from Housing Options* quoted “*It has benefited our service by helping map demand for supported housing and helped us to develop the type of information we give out to people*”
- Rushcliffe Council for Voluntary Services found that they did not have the resources to deal with increased requests for their services and as a result have secured short term funding for an Information Officer to build up and maintain their database
- The project identified that older people feel safer and more informed with a home visit and as a result of this the Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) deal with FC referrals by visiting people in their own homes. *PCSO Sandy Lammond* said that “*FC has given people more confidence in us in many different ways*”

FC has enabled organisations to meet targets and increase the number of clients they are able to support. Many said that the high profile of FC had been beneficial when working with clients who may not have been aware of their services previously. Older people who may have previously ‘fallen through the net’ are now being identified and their needs met at the right time by the right people thus avoiding the need for more costly and intrusive services in the future. FC has produced a seamless service with one point of contact giving choice and control and avoiding duplication, time and cost.

Between November 2005 and May 2006 checklists completed brought a range of services within the reach of 237 people generating 481 referrals to our partner organisations. Through referrals from First Contact partners Nott's Fire and Rescue Service carried out over 70 Home Safety Checks fitting over 100 free smoke alarms with ten year batteries.

- The Local Pension Service said “ *FC covers all of our client group, the advantage being it contacts customers who are not already known to us and who would have been unlikely to contact us. It shows the public that we are serious about partnership working and we do not just work with statutory bodies*”.

We have assisted partnership working and increased the knowledge of partners about each others services and how they can joint work counteracting the difficulties faced when previously trying to negotiate and access services. We have raised awareness of the advantages of organisations taking a holistic approach to ensure that all risks identified cutting down on the potential for future problems i.e. hospital admission due to falls.

A visit to the home by a trusted and known professional or volunteer has encouraged older people to feel secure about accessing and asking for services. FC has assisted a number of organisations throughout the county to set up similar schemes by sharing good practice, expertise and knowledge

What has not been achieved and why?

Self Assessment – Time constraints of the co-ordinator and the need to get the project established in Rushcliffe and concentrate on supporting existing partners to complete the checklist within the home. It was important to work in a phased way to ensure that partner organisations resources were not exceeded. This has had an effect on expanding to local groups and the voluntary sector which would need this model to access First Contact

What have we learnt?

- Front line staff face difficulties navigating and accessing services on behalf of older people due to lack of awareness of what is available, time restrictions, capacity and resources. Sally Garlick from Greater Nottingham Healthy Housing said “ *We always find it useful to have more information on the agencies working with the same client group as our services*”.
- Existing services are keen to increase joint working with other initiatives and value the assistance of First Contact to facilitate communication
- There is a lack of knowledge by the general public about services which are available to them and how they can be accessed.
- There is an undeniable need for projects such as First Contact to ensure that the needs of older people are met and that people do not ‘fall through the net’
- There is a huge potential to develop and provide services but that organisations are limited and restrained by a lack of resources and

capacity (although too much expansion may change the simplicity of FC)?

- The checklist needs to be simple, accessible and easy to use to encourage partners and older people to complete it
- Information needs to be in other languages to ensure equality of opportunities
- Older people assume that they will not be eligible for services
- There are gaps in low level care which can be addressed by partnership working
- We have raised awareness about holistic working and that meeting need is not the responsibility of one organisation but by organisations collectively
- Services need to be flexible and adaptable to meet the differing needs of older people and 'one size does not fit all'
- Some older people are apprehensive of accepting help due to being seen as not being able to cope in their own home
- Older people **do** want to remain independent in their own homes
- It is possible for older people to remain in their own homes with support and assistance.
- Projects like First Contact can make a positive difference to independent and safe living

Is the project sustainable?

At the six month stage 6 months old FC has already started to demonstrate the benefits of effective partnership working. The value for money and the realisation of the benefits of joining up low level services have been recognised by partner organisations assisting them to secure long term sustainability. The Local Area Agreement priorities are aligned to this project and First Contact will support the delivery of key targets in the healthy communities and older people block.

The County Council has been selected as a pilot site for link age plus and this has enabled moving forward with plans to roll out the scheme county wide.

FC is meeting the aims of the LSP (Local Strategic Partnership) through the Avoidable Injuries action plan and is one of the priorities of the LSP.

The high profile of FC helps to make it sustainable and it was recently highlighted as a model of good practice by three by 3 commissions; the Healthcare Commission, the Commission for Social Care Inspection and the Audit Commission who jointly undertook a review to assess services used by older people. FC was used to demonstrate "development of flexible new roles". The review states "key benefits of First Contact include older people receiving a holistic check of their needs and circumstances and the checklist acts as a catalyst for debate between partner agencies on roles and relationships and anticipated impact on organisations own targets for performance"

FC has presented the work of the scheme at conferences and AGM's locally and nationally to share good practice, which has enhanced its profile and standing

Who has the project reached?

See Appendix A

Future plans

- Launch of Self Assessment – this will be done gradually by introducing the checklist to a small number of groups such as day centres and luncheon clubs to assess capacity and need
- FC will continue to seek and work with all areas of the community seeking new partners which can add value to its work and address the needs of older people
- FC will continue to engage with some of the harder to reach communities such as rural and BME groups to ensure equality of service to all
- Through networking FC will continue to research and reach out to vulnerable groups whose needs are not being identified or met.
- Dependent on Link Age + funding FC will roll out county wide targeting the following areas-: Gedling, Mansfield and Ashfield, Newark and Sherwood, Broxtowe and Bassetlaw. They will work with appropriate projects in these areas to enable them to meet the needs of the community
- Continue to share good practice with other organisations
- Use information gained to inform the development of information regarding low level services in the community
- To assist with the strategic planning of services in the Rushcliffe area

Quote from Mrs Boustead (below) of West Bridgford

“First Contact is an excellent idea. All sorts of help is available but we don’t often know how to get it. This scheme will really help”



Mrs Boustead receiving the Meals at Home service from Marilyn Wass, Home Review Officer

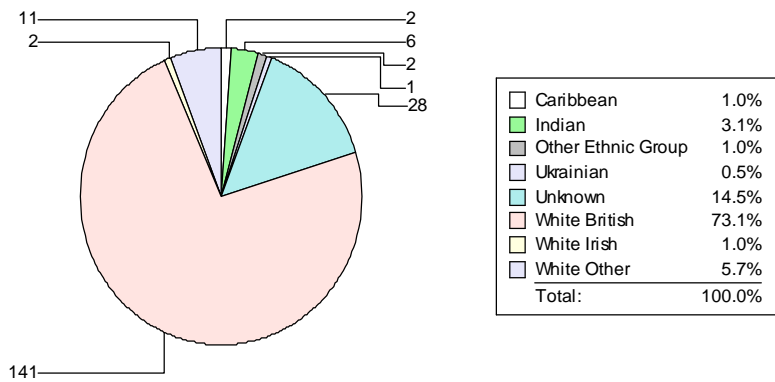
APPENDIX A

Referrals Nov 05 – May 06

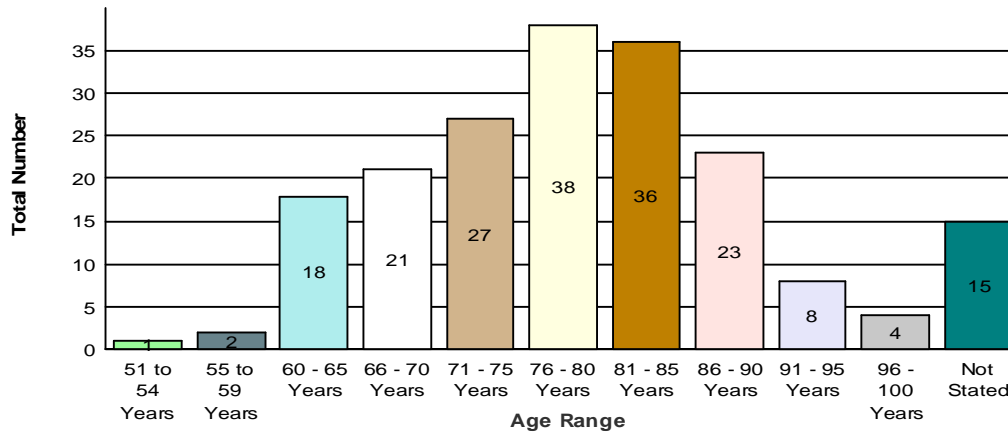
Total number of checklists completed 237

Total number of referrals 481

Ethnic Origin

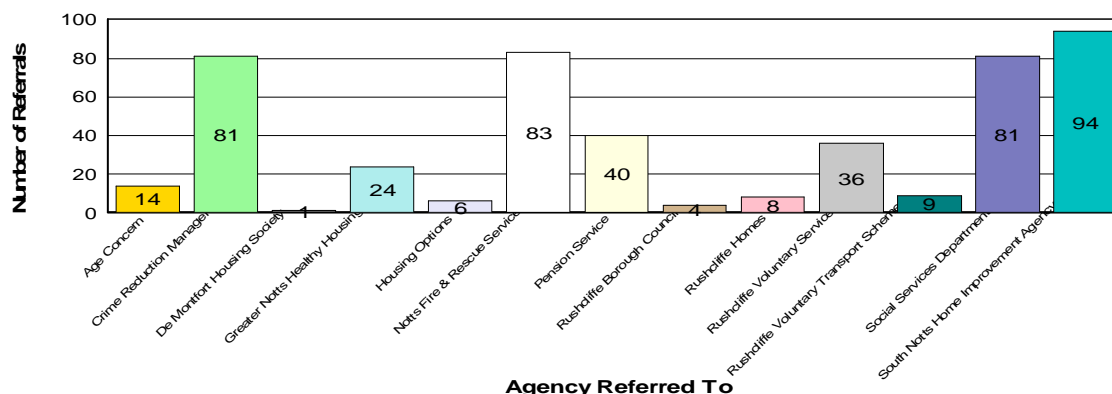


Age Group



“By receiving low level services such as a Home Safety Check or injury prevention older people will be much safer in their homes” Jane North Project Implementations Manager Social Services

Total number of referrals generated to each Agency



QUOTE – Clive Richards - Chairman of Rushcliffe Community Partnership

I was delighted to read, in the recent joint review of services used by older people undertaken by the Healthcare Commission, the Commission for Social Care Inspection and the Audit Commission, that one of our projects (First Contact) had received special mention. This is precisely the sort of project that shows the benefits of working in partnership, both for each of our individual organisations and every person in our target group and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved with this scheme. Well done”!

Case study Mr Mrs C from Keyworth

After a visit from Nott’s Fire & Rescue Service Mr Mrs C received:

- Pension credit of £10.32 per week including arrears of £134.84
- Smoke alarms with 10 year batteries and single plug sockets via NFRS
- New locks to external doors via the Police
- Adaptations including bath rail, toilet seat, walking frame, wheelchair and grab rails via Social Services
- Falls assessment resulting in Mrs C attending hospital twice a week for medical assistance
- The offer of a home carer which they declined at present

Mr C said that he couldn’t put into words how wonderful First Contact was and what a difference it had made to his and his wife’s life. He was unaware of the services and help that was available and was overwhelmed by the kindness of people.

He also said that he was now aware of organisations which he could use in the future if the need arose i.e. a carer in the home

If you would like any further information please contact:-

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