

# Mid Essex Neighbourhoods Teams

**Braintree North & Braintree South  
Neighbourhood Forum**

November 2025



# Agenda for today

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1. Welcomes & introductions
2. Kinder Essex
3. Community Agents
4. Networking time
5. Braintree District Council – Compassionate Communities
6. Age Well East
7. Feedback



# Focus Topic: Social Isolation & Loneliness

*With our invited guest speakers*







Jayne Laken  
Kinder Essex Coach

Kinder Essex







# Kinder

# Essex

bringing people together

Reducing loneliness and social isolation by  
sparking connections and growing local  
partnerships



# What is Kinder Essex?

Kinder Essex is a project that supports people to build community resilience to tackle social isolation and loneliness.

The project is delivered by Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) and is part of the Essex Wellbeing Service.

We work with anyone who is at risk of feeling socially isolated and lonely, and our priority groups include older people, people experiencing mental health challenges, people with learning disabilities, people with sensory impairments, and disabled people.



Essex  
Wellbeing Service



# The Kinder Essex Team

13 part time coaches employed by RCCE covering all districts/ boroughs, excl. Southend and Thurrock

1 Service Lead

2 Area Coordinators

1 Essex Wellbeing Service Volunteer Facilitator



# Meet your Kinder Essex Coaches



**Kelly McKenzie**  
Castle Point



**Sarah Hawkes**  
Basildon Borough



**Corrina O'Donnell**  
Rochford



**Amy Robelou**  
Brentwood



**Antonia Buck**  
Epping



**Sarah Ayling**  
Harlow

# Meet your Kinder Essex Coaches



**Kelly Coombs**  
Chelmsford



**Jayne Laken**  
Braintree



**H Goodwin**  
Colchester



**Jane Owen**  
Maldon



**Christine Chester**  
Uttlesford



**Catherine Venableness**  
Tendring



**Tracey Crooks**  
Tendring

# The Role of a Kinder Essex coach

Through the Kinder Essex campaign and the Essex Wellbeing Service, we're bringing people together to create stronger, more resilient communities. Our coaches are here to.....





Spread Kindness: Inspire and encourage small acts of kindness that make a big difference.

Connect and Collaborate: Link individuals, organisations, and community groups to build inclusion and lasting partnerships.



Support Local Initiatives: Help launch and grow activities that reduce loneliness and social isolation.







Create Opportunities: Support people to discover rewarding opportunities to volunteer and give back to their community in ways that suit them and their lifestyle.

Identify Local Needs: Work to identify and map services and social inclusion options to ensure everyone gets the support they need.



Build Community Resilience: Strengthen Essex by fostering compassion, connection, and sustainability.

# Examples of our work



Nature and Wildlife based  
projects.  
Outdoor Social Groups



Physical Activity Groups.  
Beach Days & Daytrips



Art, Craft  
and  
Creativity based projects



Knitting, Crochet and  
sewing based projects



Giving & Donation based  
community projects



Coffee Mornings  
Lunch Groups and  
Cooking Projects

# Project impact

Over the past five years, Kinder Essex has expanded its reach and impact, thanks to the incredible efforts of our dedicated coaches.

Here are some of their extraordinary achievements so far:

**20,000**

**46,000**

**500**

**1500**

**250**

Helped more than 20,000 people across the county to become more connected.

Encouraged nearly 46,000 acts of kindness over 5 years

Recruited over 500 new volunteers in 2024 alone.

Supported more than 1500 new initiatives to increase community connections over 5 years

Assisted over 250 groups and organisations in setting up new activities in 2024.

# Essex Wellbeing Service



Kinder Essex is proud to be part of the Essex Wellbeing Service, a collaborative network dedicated to improving the lives of residents across the county.

Through this service you can access help with:



Living Independently in Your Home – home adaptations, independent living skills



Healthy Lifestyle Changes – including quitting smoking, eating well, and getting active



Emotional Wellbeing – Befriending support



Child and Family Services – guidance for families and young people



# Essex Wellbeing Service



Community  
Engagement &  
Emotional Wellbeing –  
reducing loneliness and  
isolation



Essex is Working Well -  
Workplace Wellbeing  
resources to support  
employee health &  
resilience



NHS Health Checks –  
to help Essex residents stay on top  
of their health



**Essex  
Wellbeing Service**



0300 303 9988



provide.essexwellbeing@nhs.net



essexwellbeingservice.co.uk

# Contact details

Community Engagement & Services Manager RCCE

Sarah Sapsford - [sarah.sapsford@essexrcc.org.uk](mailto:sarah.sapsford@essexrcc.org.uk)

Kinder Essex Coordinators

South Essex & Harlow - Anna Wilson: [anna.wilson@ceessex.org.uk](mailto:anna.wilson@ceessex.org.uk)

Mid Essex & Uttlesford - Amy Melton: [amy.melton@ceessex.org.uk](mailto:amy.melton@ceessex.org.uk)

Social Media

 Kinder Essex

 kinderessessexofficial



Kim Vanderhoven-Smith  
Community Agent

Community Agents Essex





# COMMUNITY AGENTS ESSEX

Essex Wellbeing Service

[www.essexwellbeingservice.co.uk](http://www.essexwellbeingservice.co.uk)



Essex  
Wellbeing Service



Essex County Council

# YOUR WELLBEING, YOUR WAY.

## DELIVERED BY AN ALLIANCE OF SPECIALIST ORGANISATIONS

### Provide Community



Provide Community is the lead provider for the Essex Wellbeing Service and an employee-owned Community Interest Company (social enterprise) delivering a wide range of health and social care services across Essex, East Anglia, and other parts of the UK.

### Priority Digital Health (PDH)



PDH develops digital solutions that support better self-management and service delivery in health and wellbeing. For the Essex Wellbeing Service, PDH provides the case management system used for lifestyle bookings, volunteer coordination, and referrals or self-referrals for everyday support.

### Age Well East



Age Well East offers community friendship services to anyone over 18 in Essex. The organisation's aim is to end loneliness. Age Well East provides access to social groups and activities to empower people to live happier and healthier.

### HCRG Care Group



HCRG Care Group is one of the UK's leading independent providers of community health and care services. The organisation works with health and care commissioners and communities to transform services.

### Rural Communities Council of Essex (RCCE)



Many Essex villages appear prosperous, yet hidden deprivation exists, leaving some rural residents at a disadvantage. The Rural Community Council of Essex supports these communities and also delivers countywide services such as Community Agents Essex and Kindness Coaches.

### Kinder Essex



Kinder Essex is the next phase of the United in-Kind project. Co-created with both the community and local partners, the project uses a refreshed approach to reducing social isolation and loneliness across the county.

# The story of Community Agents

Originally a pilot project named Village Agents started in September 2009

A home visiting service designed to support adults living in their own homes and keep them out of hospital and residential care

**At the time, the project was funded by:**

Mid Essex Primary Care Trust  
Braintree Local Strategic Partnership  
Essex County Council



## **July 2014**

Essex County Council took over sole funding  
Service expanded to cover all areas of Essex  
(excluding Southend and Thurrock)

Community Agents Essex was the new name for the service.



## **April 2022**

Community Agents Essex became part of the Essex Wellbeing Service working in partnership with other organisations to deliver a 'one stop shop' offering Health & Wellbeing Support to Essex residents.

# Community Agents Essex Today

Service comprises:

- 1 Service Lead
- 1 Operational Manager
- 2 Service Coordinators
- 1 Support Officer
- 32 Community Agents

Covering 12  
districts/boroughs





**Community Agents is:**

**Free to access service**

**Network of Locally based agents**

**Short term support for adults and informal carers, who require a home visit**

**Needs driven and person centered**

**Support independent living**

**Community Agents Aim to:**

**Improve health and wellbeing**

**Help maintain or regain independent living**

**Reduce demand on health & social care services**

**Find local solutions wherever possible**

# Community Agents will visit people in their homes to assist with the following:



Getting out and about, including information on local social groups and activities as well as transport options



Independent living skills and Home adaptations such as grab rails etc and assisted tech like pendant alarms etc



Onward, quality signposting to Essex Fire and Rescue, Carers support services, Housing organisations and many more



Meeting people/befriending

# Community Agents will visit people in their homes to assist with the following:



Assist with benefit forms or signpost to the relevant local service



Complete Blue badge and Bus Pass applications and renewals



Give local information including shopping delivery, hot meal providers etc

# Outcomes and Achievements from 2024-2025



# Community Agents Cannot:

- Offer long term support
- Support people with unmanaged dependencies
- Support people who suffer from unmanaged mental health conditions
- Take people out in their vehicles
- Assist with adult social care financial assessment forms
- Assist clients to access money or amend any banking information
- Take direct referrals – all referrals must go via the EWS Single Point of Access



## June and Fred

Living in a rural part of Colchester, June was caring for her husband Fred who had dementia. June really liked to get Fred out to clubs and groups to help with both of their wellbeing but due to them living so far from facilities, it was tricky. June had taken him to the nearest town a few times but found parking difficult, especially as the bays did not give her enough room to get his wheelchair out.

Our Community Agent successfully applied for a Blue Badge for Fred, as well as connecting them both to some clubs and groups that they were interested in. This meant that both of them had something to look forward to each week.

In addition to this our agent was able to arrange some grab rails for the home and a falls alarm for Fred which not only assisted Fred but gave June more peace of mind.

June was 'over the moon' with the support offered and hadn't realised what help was available until they contacted Community Agents.

# What our Clients Say

**“Your representative visited my wife and I recently to assist with a Blue Badge application and care assistance. I would like to say that she was absolutely brilliant and helpful in every way, and through her help we have been successful in the applications. Please thank her on our behalf.”**

**“thank you very much Emma, you don’t know how much this means to me and the difference you have made to my life”**

“I had no idea these services were available, thank you so much for all the information, it will be lovely to finally get out and socialise”

# What our Agents Say

Supporting my local community especially the more vulnerable who do not have the support of family or friends."

**"Helping others and feeling rewarding in making a difference. Interacting with clients. Having supportive management team and colleagues has made a huge difference to me in my professional and personal life."**

"Providing positive assistance to older and vulnerable people"

"Being able to help people and making them aware of services that they were not aware of but will enable them to stay independently in their homes - and making people smile!"

"Meeting very interesting people, learning about their lives, the good things and the bad. Trying to help people if they have any problems, to live independently and with dignity."

## How do I refer to Community Agents?

All referrals must go via Essex Wellbeing Service, Single Point of Access

Website: [essexwellbeingsservice.co.uk](http://essexwellbeingsservice.co.uk)

Email: [provide.essexwellbeing@nhs.net](mailto:provide.essexwellbeing@nhs.net) (using referral form)

Telephone: 0300 303 9988

Our Single Point of Access is available Monday-Friday 8am-7pm and Saturday 10am-2pm for any queries or further discussion about the service  
Community Agents also accept referrals via Frontline.



Essex  
Wellbeing Service





kinder  
essex

bringing  
people  
together

kinder  
essex  
bringing people together

EWS

vice

EWS

Wellbeing

Community Agents

part of the Essex Wellbeing Service

Community Agents are a free home visiting service, helping people to live independently in their own homes. We offer a range of support, including help with everyday tasks, shopping, and social activities. Please contact us for more information.

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

for

Charlotte Riley

Thank You for making

Uttlesford

a Kinder Place

Walton  
Community Forum  
Tel: 01255 677006  
Web: waltononthenaze.org  
Email: waltoncommunityforum@gmail.com





**Essex  
Wellbeing Service**

0300 303 9988

provide.essexwellbeing@nhs.net

essexwellbeingservice.co.uk

It *ALWAYS* start with  
relationships

*Networking time with tea & biscuits*



Todorina Hammond  
Community Services Officer

Braintree District Council







# Braintree District Compassionate Community Development: Building a culture of care

Neighbourhood Forum

Todorina Hammond, Community Services Officer

11<sup>th</sup> November 2025



# What is Compassionate Community

- A Compassionate Community is an approach that enables everyone to live well within their community until the end of their lives.

Compassionate Communities UK  
(CCUK)





# What is a Compassionate Community?

## An Introduction by St Elizabeth Hospice

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tr31CFJSXGI>



# Braintree District Compassionate Community Goals



# Core Principles

- Empathy and kindness
- Community engagement
- Inclusivity and equity
- Shared responsibility for wellbeing









# Suggested additional workshop's themes

- Building networks
- What is already happening in the community & how can we develop existing programmers
- Build on what we have
- Dementia awareness
- Children & young people
- Volunteering network & recruitment
- Compassionate Conversations Training to cover discussions about the importance of Wills, Powers of Attorney and Inheritance Tax topics
- Walking groups
- Business networks



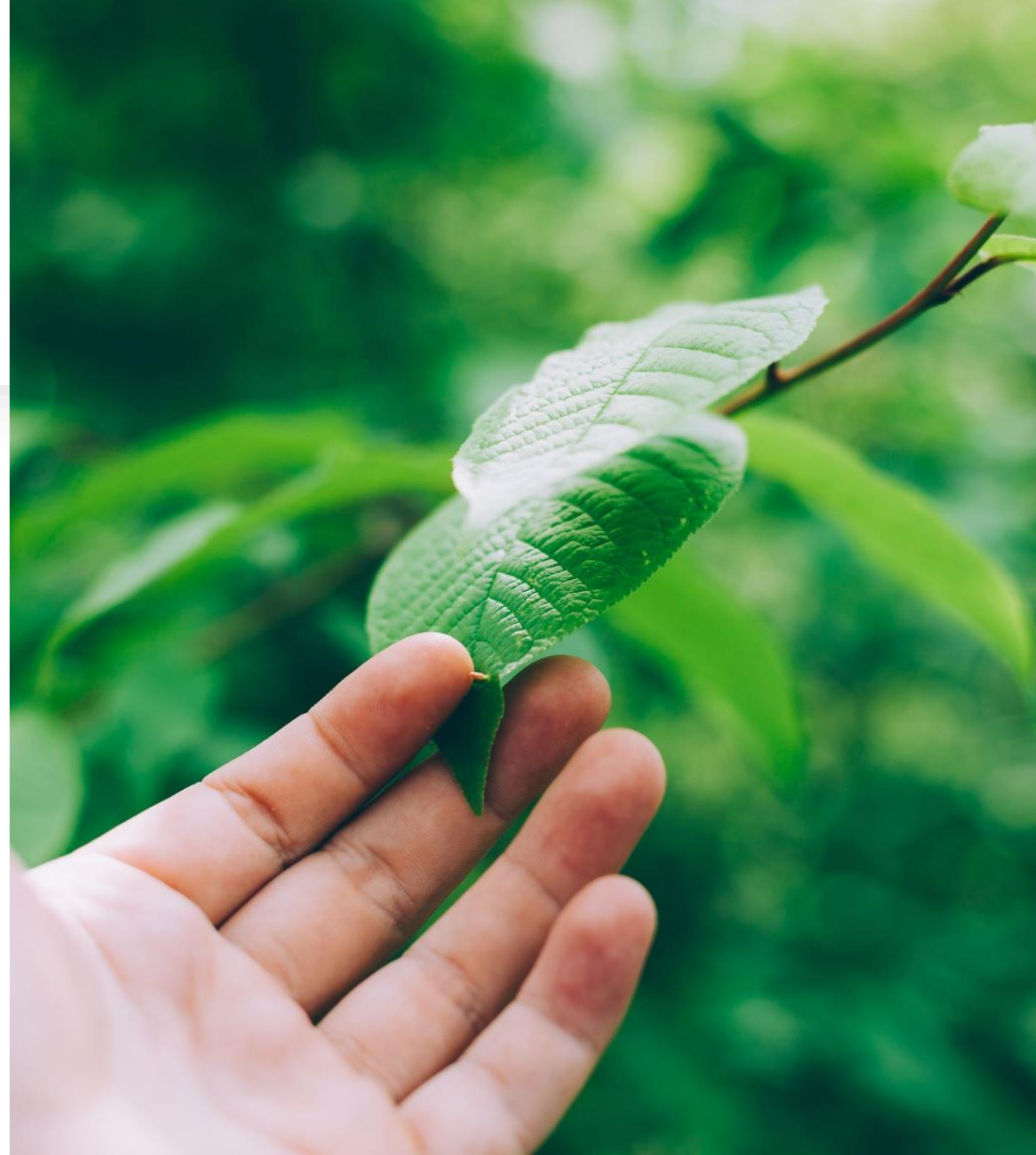
# Practical Opportunities for action

- For individuals: emotional support, dignity, reduced stress
- For communities: resilience, stronger social bonds
- For services: reduced demand on formal health and social care
- Build Compassionate Business Network



# Challenges and Consideration

- Sustainability
- Funding and resources
- Cultural sensitivity
- Measuring impact

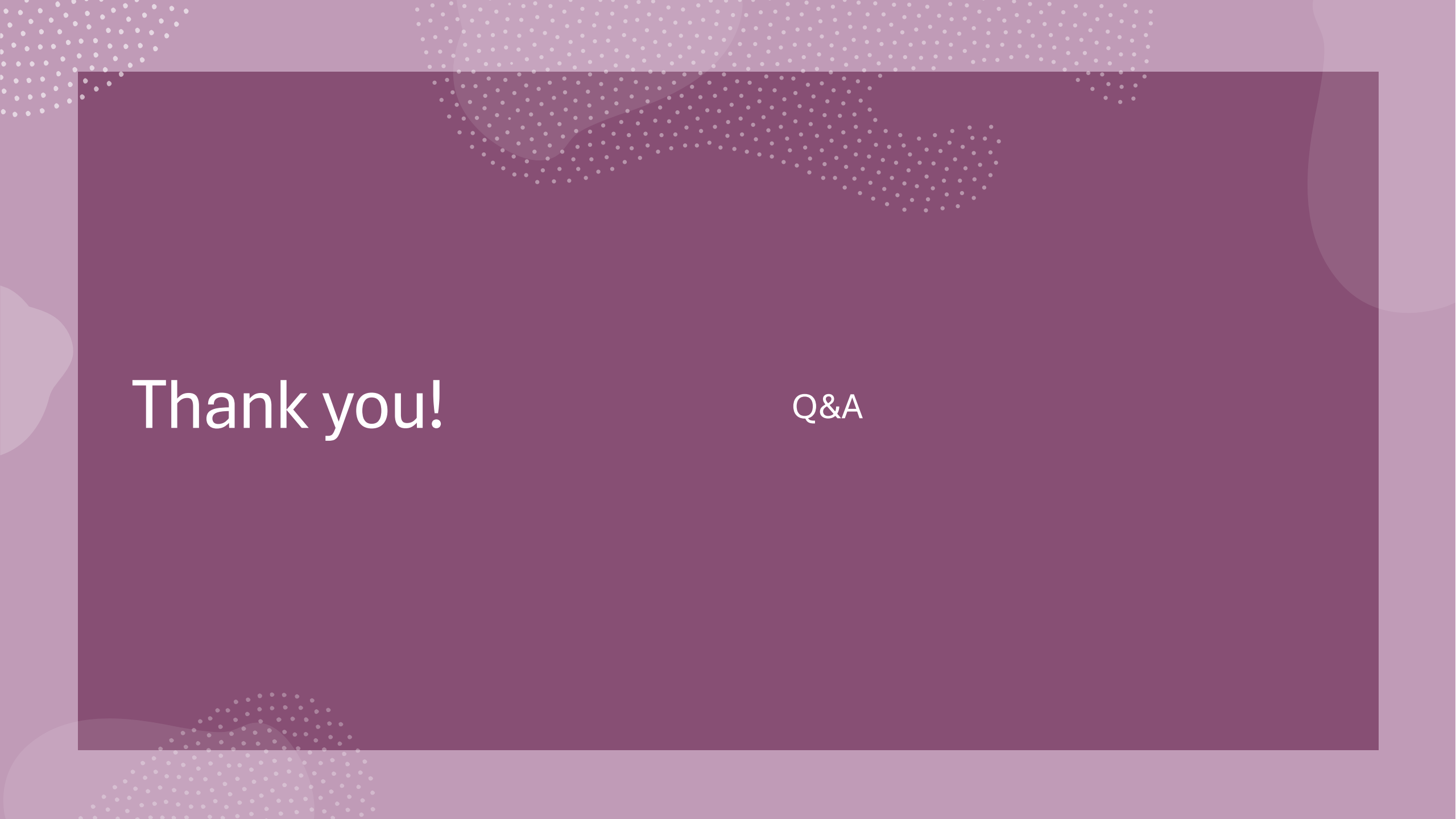




# How to get Involved







# Thank you!

Q&A



Kaye Bundy  
Operations Manager

Age Well East





**AgeWell East**

*Empowering people to age well*

An introduction  
to our services



### **Our Vision**

**To be the go-to place for people to feel connected,  
informed and included as they grow older**

### **Our Mission**

**To support and empower people to age well**

### **Our Values**

♡ **Excellence**   ♡ **Trust**   ♡ **Community**



# How We Help

Our work enables people to age well by empowering vulnerable members of our community to reach their full wellbeing potential. Through free, holistic advice and support, our Advice & Welfare, Inbound Support and Befriending services help to prevent poverty, reduce health inequalities, and tackle social isolation, loneliness, and declining emotional wellbeing at the earliest possible stages.



# Befriending, Clubs & Activities

Supported by more than 200 dedicated and fully trained volunteers, we offer a wide range of friendship services - home-visiting and telephone befriending, community companions, peer connections, and online groups and activities. For people who may go days without speaking to anyone, we bring companionship, confidence, and the chance to form lasting and meaningful social connections.

“I feel like my volunteer saved my life.

She is cheerful and we always end

our conversations laughing. I

do



**Essex  
Wellbeing Service**

# Befriending Criteria

At Age Well East, we understand that social connection is key to wellbeing. That's why we offer a range of befriending services to support adults aged 18 years+ who may be homebound, isolated, or simply seeking companionship.

## **Home Visit Befriending** (for the homebound)

Our friendly volunteers can visit clients in their homes, offering companionship and support to those who:

- Have limited mobility or long-term health conditions
- Live with dementia
- Experience mental health challenges that make leaving the house difficult (e.g., agoraphobia)
- Are unpaid carers who cannot leave the person they care for alone

## **Telephone Befriending** (for the homebound)

For those unable to receive visitors, our volunteers provide regular phone calls, offering connection, conversation, and companionship, all from the comfort of home.

## **Community Companion**

Our volunteers can accompany clients to community activities, providing support and confidence to:

- Attend social or recreational activities without feeling anxious
- Meet new people and build social confidence
- Connect with other Age Well East clients at volunteer-hosted meet-ups





## Phone Friends

Where conversations spark friendships





## PHONE FRIENDS

 A friendly voice is just a call away – reduce isolation and build meaningful connections.

 Phone Friends connects you with others for weekly chats – a simple way to ease loneliness and brighten your day.

 Share stories, laughter, and companionship – everyone is in the same boat and looking for company.

 Make new friends over the phone – our coordinators support you every step of the way.

 Stay connected, feel supported – regular calls can turn into lasting friendships.



## Phone Friends – How it Works

- Invested in a telephone conference call system.
- Schedule calls in advance.
- At the time of the call, the coordinator releases the call.
- Each client's phone will ring simultaneously.
- Anonymous calls – safeguarding.
- On answer, a message is played asking the client if they want to accept the call by pressing any number.
- Call length up to 45 mins.
- If no answer, the coordinator can recall.
- Up to 6 calls per match.
- At the end of the 6 calls, clients can decide to swap contact details and move on from the service or be matched with someone else.

# Our Regular Online Groups

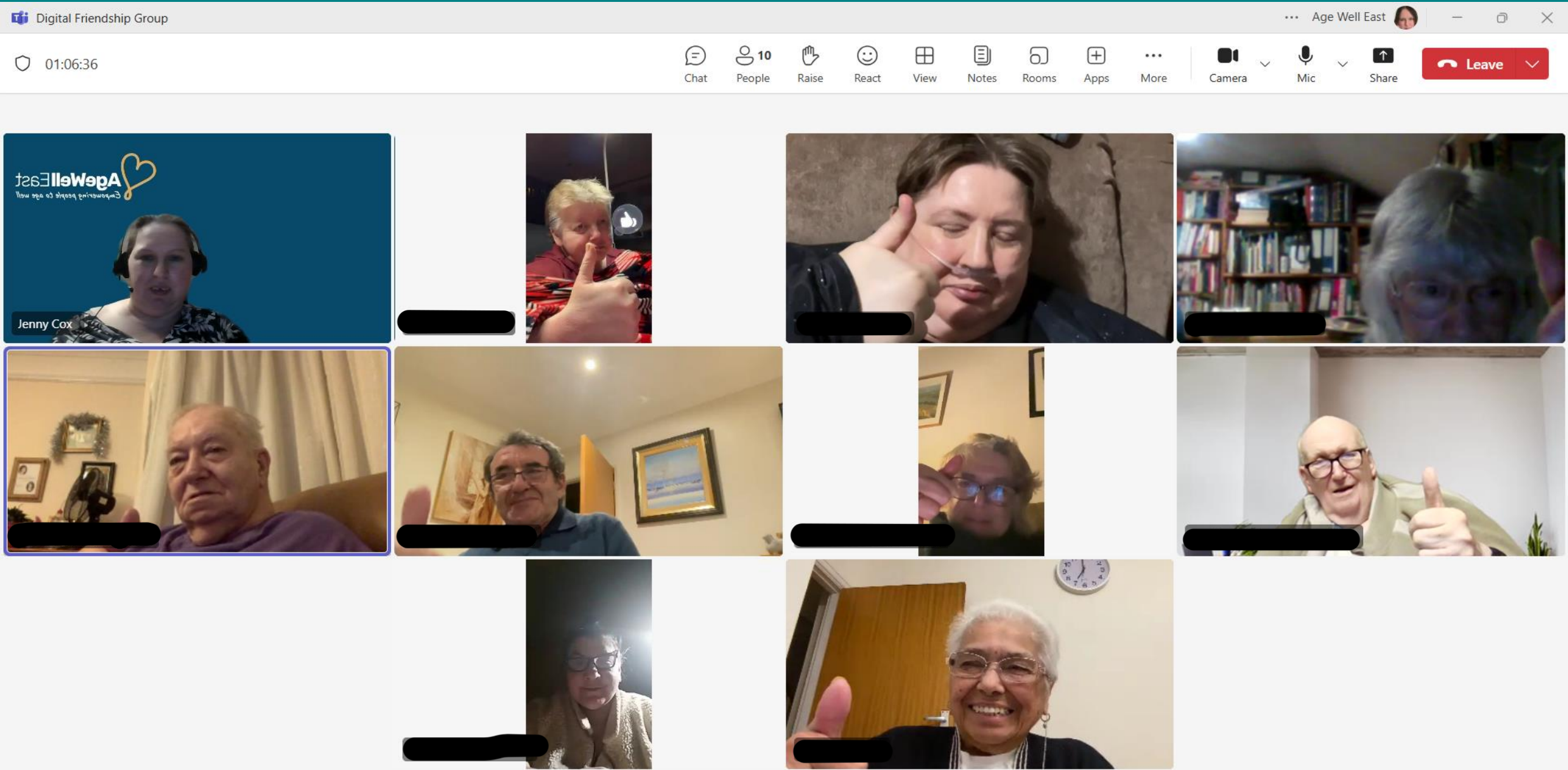
Our friendly and welcoming online groups (via Teams) enable people within our community to socialise and participate in activities from the comfort of their own homes:

- Crafts & Laughs
- Knit, Natter, Crochet, Chatter
- Friendship group
- Book club
- Arts & Crafts Drop In
- Hobbies Social
- Sketch & Draw
- Coming Soon
- Men's Social Group





# THUMBS UP from the AWE Friendship Group!



# Befriending Referral Pathway

The Essex Wellbeing Service

0300 303 9988

[provide.essexwellbeing@nhs.net](mailto:provide.essexwellbeing@nhs.net)

Opening Hours

Monday to Friday 8.00am – 7.00pm

Saturday 9.00am – 12.00pm

All enquiries, will be responded to during the opening hours above.





# Coming Soon!

## Digital Friends



### DIGITAL FRIENDS

For homebound individuals aged 60 years+ living across Essex.

Enjoy a chat over a cuppa – discover how being online can make life easier and more connected.

Learn useful digital skills – from downloading the NHS App to online shopping, video calls, GP bookings and more.

Friendly, patient volunteers – all DBS-checked and working at your pace, with up to six relaxed sessions.

Personal support at home – one-to-one help with your device, in the comfort of your own home.



Registered Charity Number 1142414

To find out more

[enquiries@agewelleast.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@agewelleast.org.uk)  
**0300 373 3333**  
[www.agewelleast.org.uk](http://www.agewelleast.org.uk)



### Digital Friends bringing digital skills support to the doorstep of the homebound

#### Bridge the Gap:

Too many seniors are left behind in a digital world. Your support can help them navigate essential services like GP appointments and NHS apps.



**Connect & Empower:** Help older adults learn basic digital skills to stay connected with family, access shopping online and regain independence.

**Combat Isolation:** Volunteers help open up new possibilities, reduce loneliness and give seniors the opportunity to connect with others beyond the walls of their home.



#### Become a Digital Friend

0300 37 33 333 [enquiries@agewelleast.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@agewelleast.org.uk)

[www.agewelleast.org.uk](http://www.agewelleast.org.uk)

Registered Charity Number 1142414



Any questions?

# Upcoming Neighbourhood Forums

## FORUM DATES & LOCATIONS

Braintree North  
Braintree South

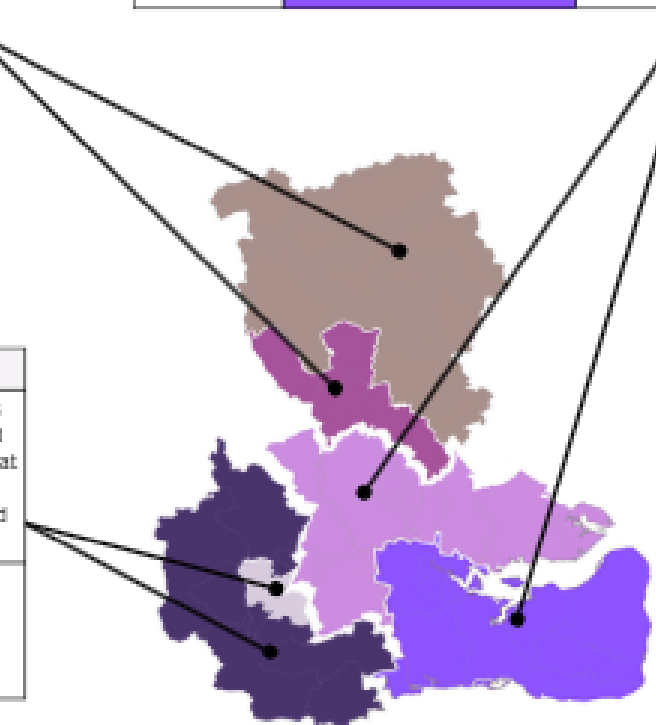
| Date                  | Topic                                  | Location                                       |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 11th Nov<br>1.30-4.00 | <b>Social Isolation and Loneliness</b> | Rayne Village Hall, Braintree, CM77 6TX        |
| 6th Jan<br>1.30-4.00  | <b>Alcohol and Substance Misuse</b>    | Braintree District Council, Braintree, CM7 9RW |

Maldon North, Chelmsford East & Witham  
Maldon Central, Dengie & South Woodham

| Date                  | Topic                                  | Location                                       |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 20th Nov<br>1.30-4.00 | <b>Social Isolation and Loneliness</b> | Spring Lodge Community Centre, Witham, CM8 2HE |
| 22nd Jan<br>1.30-4.00 | <b>Alcohol and Substance Misuse</b>    | Maldon Rugby Club, Heybridge, Maldon, CM9 4QT  |

Chelmsford Outer  
Chelmsford Central

| Date                  | Topic                                  | Location                                                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5th Nov<br>1.30-4.00  | <b>Social Isolation and Loneliness</b> | Hamptons Sports and Leisure, Great Baddow, Chelmsford CM2 9FH |
| 14th Jan<br>1.30-4.00 | <b>Alcohol and Substance Misuse</b>    | TBC                                                           |



# Attendees Feedback



## Neighbourhood Bi-monthly Forum - Attendees Feedback

