**Sid Valley HELP**

**Looking back at 2018/19**

Almost three years ago Sidmouth Health and Care Forum identified the need to set up a signposting service. During the summer of 2017 a group set up a community association group and explored what our constitution and objects should be longer term. Many people helped us along the way as we clarified what our purpose should be:

* providing a website of all local health and care support services in the area
* offering a signposting service
* networking with other local services to support a more joined up offer
* supporting new services where there is a need and providing services if other providers cannot be found.

During 2018 the website was launched, a walk in signposting service opened and networks provided. By the end of 2018 we had submitted our application to the Charities Commission and this was approved in January 2019. Looking back over the last year I’m able to celebrate what we have achieved in a relatively short time.

We have recruited Trustees and volunteers, established a recruitment process, protocol and training programme. All policies and procedures required by the Charities Commission are in place including guidance and procedures for volunteer management. A range of successful grant applications and fund raising has secured funding to provide our core activities for another year. We are grateful to volunteers and supporters who helped with this.

Sid Valley HELP provides easy access to information for people who need help from health and care organisations. It enables Health and Social Care professionals to find services in the community to support clients, patients, carers and their families. The website has proved to be the most used of the information service with 1065 visits to the site in our first year. We have also provided email, phone and face to face help. 118 individuals have used this opportunity. We have provided a Home shopping Guide and Support for Carers’ booklets.

We have spent time developing a strategy and building capacity for reducing loneliness in the Sid Valley through working with partner organisations to increase their services where possible. We have identified that future development requires a befriending service which will focus on the under 60 age groups. This will start early in the 2019/20 year.

Sid Valley HELP has tried to build a network of Health and Care organisations to improve the provision of services and fill any gaps in provision:

* In June 2018 we held a public ‘Support for Carers’ event in Carers Week attended by 12 carer support groups and organisations and attended by members of the public
* We have established a network for partner organisations that currently meets four times a year in order to improve understanding about services in the area and to improve collaborative working
* We offered free training for partner organisations on GDPR requirements, on basic first aid and safeguarding, as many small organisations identified access to training as an inhibitor for their development.

**Update and looking ahead**

In June 2019 we held a public Carers event in Carers Week attended by 17 carer support groups and organisations. Networking was successful for those who took part as well as the members of the public who came in.

Because not many people came to the twice weekly walk-in advice sessions at the Leigh Brown Room we have now stopped these sessions. We are very pleased that Age Concern has opened their centre at 48 High Street and they now provide an advice service Monday to Friday. The Sid Valley Help database is shared with Age Concern Sidmouth who will maintain it for us. We still provide a free and confidential advice service through the website, email, phone and text. We have plans for ‘Pop-Up’ Information sessions in a range of venues this year.

We have recently started a number of new activities aimed at reducing loneliness and social isolation:

* drop-in Tea & Chat sessions every fortnight at the Mustard Seed Café
* monthly coffee mornings at The Elizabeth Hotel
* a home befriending service for the under 60s
* weekly ‘New Mums’ sessions at the Stowford Children’s Centre.

I would like to say ‘thank you’ to all of our volunteers and supporters who have encouraged and supported us during the last year. I hope that you will enjoy the journey with us during the next year.

Di Fuller, Chair of Trustees

July 2019